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William Daniel Harding.

NEW

T. Lawrence. J. H. Armytage

Chas Jones

A Tennyson

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A NEW

SPIRIT OF THE AGE.

EDITED By R. H. HORNE,

Author of "Orion,"—"Gregory VII.," &c. &c.

"It is an easy thing to praise or blame:
The hard task, and the virtue, to do both."

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ALFRED TENNYSON.

" Touches there are, be the Heavens ever thanked, of new Sphere-melody."

CARLYLE.

" A haunting music, sole perhaps and lone
Supportress of the faery roof, made moan
Throughout, as fearing the whole charm might fade.

KEATS.

" Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,
But feeds on the aerial kisses
Of shapes that haunt Thought's wildernesses.
He will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illume
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
Nor heed nor see what things they be;
But from these, create he can
Forms more real than real man,—
Nurslings of immortality."

SHELLEY.

ALFRED TENNYSON.

THE poetic fire is one simple and intense element in human nature; it has its source in the divine mysteries of our existence; it developes with the first abstract delight of childhood, the first youthful aspiration towards something beyond our mortal reach; and eventually becomes the master passion of those who are possessed with it in the highest degree, and the most ennobling and refining influence that can be exercised upon the passions of others. At times, and in various degrees, all are open to the influence of the poetic element. Its objects are palpable to the external senses, in proportion as individual perception and sensibility have been habituated to contemplate them with interest and delight; and palpable to the imagination in proportion as an individual possesses this faculty, and has habituated it to ideal subjects and profoundly sympathetic reflections. If there be a third condition of its pre-

sence, it must be that of a certain consciousness of dreamy glories in the soul, with vague emotions, aimless impulses, and prophetic sensations, which may be said to tremble on the extreme verge of the fermenting source of that poetic fire, by which the life of humanity is purified and adorned. The first and second of these conditions must be clear to all; the last will not receive so general an admission, and perhaps may not be so intelligible to everybody as could be wished. We thus arrive at the conclusion that the poetic element, though simple and entire, has yet various forms and modifications of development according to individual nature and circumstance, and, therefore, that its loftiest or subtlest manifestations are not equally apparent to the average mass of human intelligence. He, then, who can give a form and expression to these lofty or these subtle manifestations, in a way that shall be the most intelligible to the majority, is he who best accomplishes the mission of a Poet. We are about to claim for Alfred Tennyson—living as he is, and solely on account of what he has already accomplished—the title of a true poet of the highest class of genius, and one whose writings may be considered as peculiarly lucid to all competent understandings that have cultivated a love for poetry.

It may fairly be assumed that the position of Alfred Tennyson, as a poet of fine genius, is now

thoroughly established in the minds of all sincere and qualified lovers of the higher classes of poetry in this country. But what is his position in the public mind? Or, rather, to what extent is he known to the great mass of general readers? Choice and limited is the audience, we apprehend, to whom this favoured son of Apollo pours forth his melodious song. It is true, however, that the public is "a rising man" in its gradual appreciation, perhaps of every genius of the present time; and certainly this appreciation is really on the rise with respect to the poetry of Tennyson. It is only some thirteen years since he published his first volume, and if it require all this time for "the best judges" to discover his existence, and determine "in one way, and the other," upon some of his most original features, the public may be excused for not knowing more about his poems than they do at present. That they desire to know more is apparent from many circumstances.

The name of Alfred Tennyson is pressing slowly, calmly, but surely,—with certain recognition but no loud shouts of greeting,—from the lips of the discerners of poets, of whom there remain a few, even in the cast-iron ages, along the lips of the less informed public, 'to its own place' in the stony house of names. That it is the name of a true poet, the drowsy world exerts itself to acknowledge; testifying with a heavy lifting of the eyelid, to its con-

sciousness of a new light in one of the nearer sconces. This poet's public is certainly awake to him, although you would not think so. And this public's poet, standing upon the recognition of his own genius, begins to feel the ground firm beneath his feet, after no worse persecution than is comprised in those charges of affectation, quaintness, and mannerism, which were bleated down the ranks of the innocent "sillie" critics as they went one after another to water. Let the toleration be chronicled to the honor of England.* And who knows?—There may be hope from this, and a few similar instances of misprision of the high treason of poetry, that our country may conclude her grand experience of a succession of poetical writers unequalled in the modern world, by learning some ages hence to know a poet when she sees one. Certainly if we looked only to the peculiar genius of Tennyson, with the eyes of our forefathers, and some others rather nearer to our own day, we should find it absolutely worthy of being either starved or stoned, or as Shelley said of Keats, "hooted into the grave."

A very striking remark was made in the *Times*,

* One or two exceptions should be noticed. The "Examiner," in a graceful and appreciating notice of the recent publication of Leigh Hunt's collected works, says, that he was the first to hail the appearance of Alfred Tennyson in the "Tatler." In 1833 a philosophical criticism appeared on Tennyson, in the "Monthly Repository" written by W. J. Fox, which unhesitatingly recognized his genius.

(December 26th, 1842), with reference to the fate and progress of true poets in the mind of the public. Alluding to "the noble fragment of 'Hyperion,'" the writer says, "Strange as it may appear, it is no less certain that the half-finished works of this young, miseducated, and unripe genius, have had the greatest influence on that which is now the popular poetry. In the eyes of the 'young England' of poets, as in those of Shelley—

> 'The soul of Adonais, like a star,
> Beacons from the abode where the immortals are.'

"What a text," pursues the same writer, "for a dissertation on the mutability of popular taste!" True indeed; but we must not be tempted into it, at present. Objecting to the expressions of "miseducated" and "unripe," as only applicable to the errors in "Endymion" and his earlier poems; and to "half-finished" as only applicable (we believe this is correct?) to "Hyperion," there can be no sort of doubt of the influence. But there is this peculiarity attached to it, one which stands alone in the history, certainly of all modern influences. It is, that he has not had a single mechanical imitator. There is an excellent reason for this. A mechanical imitation of style, or by choice of similar subjects, would not bear any resemblance to Keats; no one would recognise the intended imitation. When somebody expressed

his surprise to Shelley, that Keats, who was not very conversant with the Greek language, could write so finely and classically of their gods and goddesses, Shelley replied "He *was* a Greek." We may also refer to what Landor has said of him, in the paper headed with that gentleman's name in Vol. I. of this present work. The writings of Keats are saturated and instinct with the purest inspiration of poetry; his mythology is full of ideal passion; his divinities are drawn as from "the life," nay, from their inner and essential life; his enchantments and his "faery land" are exactly like the most lovely and truthful records of one who has been a dweller among them and a participator in their mysteries; and his descriptions of pastoral scenery, are often as natural and simple as they are romantic, and tinged all over with ideal beauty. Admitting all the faults, errors in taste, and want of design in his earliest works, but laying our hands with full faith upon his "Lamia," "Isabella," "The Eve of St. Agnes," the four "Odes" in the same collection, and the fragment of "Hyperion," we unhesitatingly say that there is no poet, ancient or modern, upon whom the title of "Divine" can be more appropriately conferred than upon Keats. While the "Byron School" was in its glory, it is no great wonder that Wordsworth should have been a constant laughing-stock, and Keats an object for contemptuous dismissal to the

tomb. It must, however, be added that the marked neglect of the public towards the latter has continued down to the present day. The pure Greek wine of Keats has been set aside for the thin gruel of Kirk White. But if there be faith in the pure Ideal, and in the progress of intelligence and refinement, the ultimate recognition of Keats by the public will certainly follow that of the "fit audience" which he will ever continue to possess. Of all the numerous imitators of Lord Byron, not one now remains. And this may be mentioned as a quiet commentary upon his supercilious fling at the superior genius of John Keats.

How it should happen that the influencer of so many spirits of the present time should himself have been left to the ecstatic solitude of his own charmed shores and "faery lands forlorn," while those very spirits have each and all of them made some passage for themselves into the public mind, is one of those problems which neither the common fate of originators, the obduracy or caprice of the public, the clinging poison of bygone malice and depreciation, nor the want of sufficient introduction and championship on the part of living appreciators, can furnish a perfectly satisfactory solution. Such, however, is the fact at this very time. Against this we have only to place a cheap "popular" reprint of his poems, and his admission into Gallignani's collection.

We have said that Keats has had no imitators; of what nature, then, has been his influence upon the poetry of the present day? It has been spiritual in its ideality; it has been classical in its revivification of the forms and images of the antique, which he inspired with a new soul; it has been romantic in its spells, and dreams, and legendary associations; and it has been pastoral in its fresh gatherings from the wild forests and fields, and as little as possible from the garden, and never from the hot-house and the flower-shows. His imagination identified itself with the essences of things, poetical in themselves, and he acted as the interpreter of all this, by words which eminently possess the prerogative of expressive form and colour, and have a sense of their own by which to make themselves understood. Who shall imitate these peculiarities of genius? It is not possible. But kindred spirits will always recognize the voice from other spheres, will hail the "vision, and the faculty divine," come from whom it may, will have their own inherent impulses quickened to look into their own hearts, and abroad upon nature and mankind, and to work out the purposes of their souls.

How much of the peculiar genius of Keats is visible in Alfred Tennyson, must have been apparent to all those who are familiar with their writings; and yet it is equally certain that Tennyson, so far from being an imitator of any one, is undoubtedly one of

the most original poets that ever lived. Wordsworth has had many imitators, some of whom have been tolerably successful,—especially in the simplicity. They thought *that* was the grand secret. A few who had genuine *ideas* have been more worthy followers of the great poet of profound sentiment. Tennyson has also had followers; but only such as have felt his spirit, nor is he likely to have any mere imitators, for the dainty trivialities and mannerism of his early productions have been abandoned, and now let those imitate who can. They must have some fine poetical elements of *their own*, as in the recent instance of Mr. Patmore, in order to be at all successful.

If a matter-of-fact philosopher who prided himself upon the hardness of his head, and an exclusive faculty of understanding actual things, were to apply to us for the signification of the word "Poetry," we could not do better than thrust into his hand, widely opened for the expected brick, one of Alfred Tennyson's volumes. His poetry is poetry in the intense sense, and admits of no equivocal definitions. The hard-headed realist might perhaps accept Macaulay's "Lays of Ancient Rome," as good martial music, (with the help of a little prompting from a friend of some imagination,) or Mr. Henry Taylor's "Philip van Artevelde" as excellent steady thinking; or a considerable portion even of Wordsworth's works as sound good sense,

though in verse, (a great admission); but if he did not understand Tennyson's poems to be "Poetry," he would not be very likely to misunderstand them for anything else. The essence and element of them are poetry. The poetry of the matter strikes through the manner. The Art stands up in his poems, self-proclaimed, and not as any mere modification of thought and language, but the operation of a separate and definite power in the human faculties. A similar observation attaches itself to the poetry of Shelley, to the later productions of Keats, to certain poems of Coleridge. But Tennyson and Shelley, more particularly, walk in the common daylight in their "singing clothes;" they are silver-voiced when they ask for salt, and say "Good-morrow to you" in a cadence. They each have a poetical dialect; not such a one as Wordsworth deprecated when he overthrew a system; not a conventional poetical idiom, but the very reverse of it—each poet fashioning his phrases upon his own individuality; and speaking as if he were making a language then, for the first time, under those 'purple eyes' of the muse, which tinted every syllable as it was uttered, with a separate benediction.

Perhaps the first spell cast by Mr. Tennyson, the master of many spells, he cast upon the ear. His power as a lyrical versifier is remarkable. The measures flow softly or roll nobly to his pen; as

well one as the other. He can gather up his strength, like a serpent, in the gleaming coil of a line; or dart it out straight and free. Nay, he will write you a poem with nothing in it except music, and as if its music were everything, it shall charm your soul. Be this said, not in reproach,—but in honour of him and of the English language, for the learned sweetness of his numbers. The Italian lyrists may take counsel, or at once enjoy,—

'Where Claribel low lieth.'

But if sweetness of melody, and richness of harmony be the most exquisitely sensuous of Tennyson's characteristics, he is no less able to "pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone," for certainly his works are equally characterized by their thoughtful grace, depth of sentiment, and ideal beauty. And he not only has the most musical words at his command (without having recourse to exotic terminologies) but he possesses the power of conveying a sense of colour, and a precision of outline by means of words, to an extraordinary degree. In music and colour he was equalled by Shelley; but in *form*, clearly defined, with no apparent effort, and no harsh shades or lines, Tennyson stands unrivalled.

His ideality is both adornative and creative, although up to this period it is ostensibly rather the former than the latter. His ideal faculty is either

satisfied with an exquisitely delicate Arabesque painting, or clears the ground before him so as to melt and disperse all other objects into a suitable atmosphere, or aerial perspective, while he takes horse on a passionate impulse, as in some of his ballads which seem to have been panted through without a single pause. This is the case in "Oriana," in "Locksley Hall," in "The Sisters," &c. Or, at other times, selecting some ancient theme, he stands collected and self-contained, and rolls out with an impressive sense of dignity, orb after orb of that grand melancholy music of blank verse which leaves long vibrations in the reader's memory; as in "Ulysses," the divine "Œnone," or the "Morte D'Arthur." The idea of the death, or fading away of Fairy-land, allegorically conveyed in the latter poem, is apparently the main basis of the design, and probably original; but it is observable that Tennyson scarcely ever invents any elaborate design of moving characters. The two other poems just named, with the "Lord of Burleigh," "Lady Clare," "Dora," "Godiva," and most of those which contain human character in a progressive story, are taken from various sources; but they are taken by a master-hand, and infused with new life and beauty, new thought and emotion. The same peculiarity as to ground-plot is observable in Shakspere and Chaucer, who never invented their subjects or stories; but

filled them up as nobody else ever had done, or could do. It was exactly the converse with Scott, who invented nearly all his stories, but borrowed materials to fill them up from all possible sources. Tennyson does not appear to possess much inventive construction. He has burnt his epic, or this would have settled the question. We would almost venture to predict that he will never write another; nor a five-act tragedy, nor a long heroic poem. Why should he?

Alfred Tennyson may be considered generally under four different aspects,—developed separately or in collective harmony, according to the nature of his subject—that is to say, as a poet of fairy-land and enchantment; as a poet of profound sentiment in the affections (as Wordsworth is in the intellect and moral feelings); as a painter of pastoral nature; and as the delineator and representer of tragic emotions, chiefly with reference to one particular passion.

With regard to the first of these aspects of his genius, it may be admitted at the outset that Tennyson is not the portrayer of individual, nor of active practical character. His characters, with few exceptions, are generalizations, or refined abstractions, clearly developing certain thoughts, feelings, and forms, and bringing them home to all competent sympathies. This is almost exclusively the case in the

first volume, published in 1830. Those critics, therefore, who have seized upon the poet's early loves—his Claribels, Lilians, Adelines, Madelines—and comparing them with real women, and the lady-loves of the actual world, have declared that they were not natural beings of flesh and blood, have tried them by a false standard. They do not belong to the flesh-and-blood class. There is no such substance in them. They are creatures of the elements of poetry. And, for that reason, they have a sensuous life of their own; as far removed from ordinary bodily condition as from pure spirit. They are transcendentalisms of the senses; examples of the Homeric *εἴδωλα*, or rather —if we may venture to trace the genealogical history of such fragile creatures — the descendants of those *εἴδωλα*, as modified by the influence of the romantic ages. Standing or seated, flying or floating, laughing or weeping, sighing or singing, pouting or kissing, they are lovely underbodies, which no German critic would for a moment hesitate to take to his visionary arms; but we are such a people for "beef." We cry aloud for soul—we want more soul — we want to be inspired — and the instant anything is floated before our ken which might serve as an aerial guide to the Elysian Valley, or the Temple of the Spirit, then we instantly begin to utter the war-cry of "dreamy folly!" "mystical mystery!" and urged by the faith (the beef) that is in us, continue our lowing

for the calf, that surely cometh, but cannot satisfy our better cravings.

Continuing our inquiries into the fruits of Tennyson's early excursions in dream-land, we perceive that he was inclined, even when upon commoner ground, to accept the fantasy of things, for the things themselves. His Muse was his own Lady of Shalott,—she was metamorphosed into the Merman and the Mermaid; they reunited at the bottom of the sea in the form of the Kraken, and lay swelling with the sense of ages beneath enormous growths floating upon the surface. Why this "Kraken" should have been omitted in the present collection puzzles and annoys us as much as his insertion of "the Goose," and one or two other such things. But nothing in this class of subjects is more remarkable, than the power he possesses of communicating to simple incidents and objects of reality, a preternatural spirit as part of the enchantment of the scene. Of this kind, in the dim and desolate chamber of the moated grange, where Mariana, in the anguish of mingled hope and despair, moaned away her dreary life—of this kind, to her morbid fancy, was the blue fly that "sung i' the pane;" and the mouse that "behind the mouldering wainscot shrieked." We have heard it asked—as such questions always are asked by numbers—what more there was in this than the mere details of a description of squalidness and desertion? The best answer was recently made by * * *

"Why," said he, "don't you know that this ghastly fly had been bred of a corpse—and knew it? As for the mouse, it had clearly been the poor starved niece of a witch, and the witch had murdered her, her soul passing into the body of a mouse by reason of foul relationship." This, at least, was accepting a suggestion at full. In such a spirit of imaginative promptitude and coincidence should such things be read, or nothing will come of the reading.

> "Old faces glimmer'd through the doors,
> Old footsteps trod the upper floors,
> Old voices called her from without!"

But since "the low sky raining" in the autumn eve, when the white-robed dying form of the Lady of Shalott floated in the boat towards the many-towered palaces of the Knights, a marked change has come over the genius of this poet with regard to his female characters. Instead of the scions of the fairy-race, most of whom seem to have been the poet's "cousin"—a consanguinity which evidently haunts him—we had in the volume of 1832, some equally beautiful women, such as the "Miller's Daughter," "Margaret," and the proud "Lady Clara Vere de Vere;" while in the volume last given to the public, there are several more, and not a single additional sylph. Here we find him not only awake to the actual world, but awake with a set of totally new experiences. In no writer is the calm intensity of pure

affection, both in its extreme tenderness and continuity, more exquisitely portrayed, than in the poems of the "Miller's Daughter," "Dora," and the "Gardener's Daughter." They are steeped in the very sweetest fountains of the human heart.

In the description of pastoral nature in England, no one has ever surpassed Tennyson. The union of fidelity to nature and extreme beauty is scarcely to be found in an equal degree in any other writer. There may sometimes be a tone of colour, and the sense of a sustained warmth in the temperature, which is rather Italian; and this is a peculiarity of our poets, who invariably evade notice or consciousness of the four seasons in each day, which is a characteristic of our climate. The version which all English poets give of "Spring," more especially, is directly at variance with what everybody feels and knows of that bitter season in this country. But allowing for this determination to make the best of what we have, no poet more closely adheres to nature. He is generally as sweet, and fresh, and faithful in his drawing and colouring of a landscape, as the prose pastorals of Miss Mitford, which is saying the utmost we can for a possessor of those qualifications. But besides this, Tennyson idealises, as a poet should, wherever his subject needs it—not so much as Shelley and Keats, but as much as the occasion will bear, without undue preponderance,

or interfering with the harmony of his general design. His landscapes often have the truthful ideality of Claude, combined with the refined reality of Calcott, or the homely richness of Gainsborough. The landscape-painting of Keats was more like the back grounds of Titian and Annibal Carracci; as that of Shelley often resembled the pictures of Turner. We think the extraordinary power of language in Shelley sometimes even accomplished, not only the wild brilliancy of colouring, but the apparently impossible effect, by words, of the wonderful aerial perspective of Turner—as where he speaks of the loftiest star of heaven "pinnacled dim in the intense inane." But with Tennyson there is no tendency to inventiveness in his descriptions of scenery; he contents himself with the loveliness of the truth seen through the medium of such emotion as belongs to the subject he has in hand. But as these emotions are often of profound passion, sentiment, reflection, or tenderness, it may well be conceived that his painting is of that kind which is least common in art. The opening of "Œnone" is a good example, and is a fine prelude to love's delirium, which follows it.

"There lies a vale in Ida, lovelier
Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.
The swimming vapour slopes athwart the glen,
Puts forth an arm and creeps from pine to pine,

And loiters, slowly drawn. On either hand
The lawns and meadow-ledges midway down
Hang rich in flowers, and far below them roars
The long brook falling thro' the clov'n ravine
In cataract after cataract to the sea."

If Alfred Tennyson became awake to the actual world in his second volume of 1832, his publication in 1843 showed him more completely so; awake after the storm, after the wrecks, the deepest experiences of life. In the ten years' interval he has known and suffered. So far from any of his private personal feelings being paraded before the public, either directly, or by means of characters which everybody shall recognise as identical, after the fashion of Lord Byron, there is a withdrawal from every identification, and generally a veil of ideality cast over the whole. Certainly Tennyson is not at all dramatic. That he can be intensely tragic, in pure emotion and deep passion of expression, we shall presently show; that he has great power of concentration, will be equally apparent; and that in his powerful monodrama of "St. Simeon Stylites," and in the various imaginative or fanciful personages he introduces, he presents full evidence of the faculty of self-absorption in the identity of other idiosyncrasies, we think also to be incontestible. Still, he only selects a peculiar class of characters—those in whom it shall not be requisite to dispossess

himself of beauty (Stylites being the only exception); nor can he speak without singing. His style of blank verse is elegiac, epic, heroic, or suited to the idyl; and not at all dramatic. His characters, as we have said before, are generalizations or abstractions; they pass before the imagination, and often into the very centre of the heart and all its emotions; they do not stand forth conspicuous in bone or muscle, nor in solidity, nor roundness, nor substantial identity. They have no little incidental touches of character, and we should not know them if we met them out of his poetry. They do not eat and drink. One never thought of that before; and it seems an offence to hint at such a thing concerning them. But besides all this, our poet cannot laugh outright in his verses; not joyously, and with self-abandonment. His comic, grotesque, or burlesque pieces, are neither natural nor wild. They are absolute failures by dint of ingenuity. His "Amphion" and "the Goose" have everything but that which such attempts most need—animal spirits. There is something intermediate, however, which he can do, and which is ten thousand times more uncommon,—that of an harmonious blending of the poetical and familiar, so that the latter shall neither destroy the former, nor vex the taste of the reader. As an instance of this, we would quote "Will Waterproof's Lyrical Monologue," which is perfection; as

also were Shelley's poetical "Letter to ——," and his "Julian and Maddalo." Of the constructive power, and the distribution of action required in a dramatic composition, there is no need to speak; but it is time to consider the tragic faculties of our author, and his power over the passions by description.

The frequent tendency to the development or illustration of tragic emotion has been less noticed than any other important feature of Tennyson's poetry. In his first volume (1830) we find a "Dirge;" the "Death of Love;" the "Ballad of Oriana;" the "Supposed Confessions;" and "Mariana;" all of which are full of the emotions and thoughts which lead directly to, if they do not involve, tragic results. The same may be said of the following poems in the second volume (1832):—the "Lady of Shalott;" "Eleanore;" "Sappho" (called "Fatima" in the new edition!); "Œnone;" the "New Year's Eve;" and the "Sisters." Upon this last-named poem we will venture a few remarks and suggestions.

"The Sisters" is a ballad poem of six stanzas, each of only four lines, with two lines of a chorus sung by the changeful roaring of the wind "in turret and tree"—which is made to appear conscious of the passions that are at work. In this brief space is comprised, fully told, and with many suggestions beyond, a deep tragedy.

The story is briefly this. A youthful earl of great

personal attractions, seduces a young lady of family, deserts her, and she dies. Her sister, probably an elder sister, and not of equal beauty, had, apparently, also loved the earl. When, therefore, she found that not only had her love been in vain, but her self-sacrifice in favour of her sister had only led to the misery and degradation of the latter, she resolved on the earl's destruction. She exerted herself to the utmost to attract his regard; she "hated him with the hate of hell," but, it is added, that she "loved his beauty passing well," for the earl "was fair to see." Abandoning herself in every way to the accomplishment of her purpose, she finally lulled him to sleep, with his head in her lap, and then stabbed him "through and through." She composed and smoothed the curls upon "his comely head," admiring to see that "he looked so grand when he was dead;" and wrapping him in a winding sheet, she carried him to his proud ancestral hall, and "laid him at his mother's feet."

We have no space to enter into any psychological examination of the peculiar character of this sister; with regard, however, to her actions, the view that seems most feasible, and the most poetical, if not equally tragic, is that she did not actually commit the self-abandonment and murder; but went mad on the death of her sister, and imagined in her delirium all that has been related. But "read the part" how

we may, there never was a deeper thing told in briefer words.

The third volume of "Tennyson's Poems," (that is, the Vol. II. of the new edition last issued), contains several tragic subjects. The one most penetrating to the heart, the most continuous, and most persevered in with passionate intensity, so that it becomes ineradicable from the sensibility and the memory, is "Locksley Hall." The story is very simple; not narrative, but told by the soliloquy of anguish poured out by a young man amid the hollow weed-grown courts of a ruined mansion. He loved passionately; his love was returned; and the girl married another, — a dull, every-day sort of husband. The story is a familiar one in the world—too familiar; but in Tennyson's hands it becomes invested with yet deeper life, a vitality of hopeless desolation. The sufferer invoking his betrayer, her beauty and her falsehood, by the memory of their former happiness, says that such a memory is the very crown of sorrow :—

"Drug thy memories, lest thou learn it, lest thy heart be put to proof,
In the dead unhappy night, and when the rain is on the roof.

Like a dog he hunts in dreams, and thou art staring at the wall,
Where the dying night-lamp flickers, and the shadows rise and fall.

Then a hand shall pass before thee, pointing to his drunken sleep,
To thy widowed marriage-pillow, to the tears that thou shalt weep.

Thou shalt hear the "Never! never!" whispered by the phantom years,
And a song from out the distance, in the ringing of thine ears;
And an eye shall vex thee, looking ancient kindness on thy pain.

* * * * * * *

Of similar character and depth of tone is the poem of "Lady Clara Vere de Vere," who impelled to suicide one of the victims of her heartless beauty. The long-drawn music of her very name is suggestive of the proud pedigree to which she was ready to offer up any sacrifice. For continuity of affectionate tenderness and deep pathos in the closing scene, we should mention "The Lord of Burleigh," and the idyl of "Dora,"—the style of both being studiously artless, the latter, indeed, having a Scriptural simplicity which presents a curious contrast to the poet's early manner. In the poem of "Love and Duty" there is a general tone of suppressed emotion, and a violent effort against nature which is deeply painful. The equal tenderness and bitterness of the anguish renders it the more difficult to receive with that feeling of resignation and sense of right which one would wish for, on such heart-breaking occasions. It is to be feared that some conventionalities have been erected into undue tyrannies over the noblest and most impassioned impulses, although the poet, not choosing to be more explicit in his story, or its suggestions, may not have intended to illustrate any such principle.

The clear course of feeling in the two preceding poems, which are equally pathetic and conclusive, will generally be preferable, even to the more intensely tragic emotion of this latter one.

It remains to offer a remark on two or three other poems which also form the most striking features of the present collection.

With respect to "Œnone," it is an exquisitely successful attempt of the poet to infuse his own beating heart's blood into the pale blind statues of the antique times; and loses no jot of the majesty, while the vitality informs the grace. It is not surpassed by anything of the kind in Keats, or Shelley, or Landor. The "Morte D'Arthur" precisely reverses the design of the Greek revival; and, with equal success, draws back the Homeric blood and spirit to inspire a romantic legend.

Of the "Ulysses" we would say that the mild dignity and placid resolve — the steady wisdom after the storms of life, and with the prospect of future storms—the melancholy fortitude, yet kingly resignation to his destiny which gives him a restless passion for wandering — the unaffected and unostentatious modesty and self-conscious power,—the long softened shadows of memory cast from the remote vistas of practical knowledge and experience, with a suffusing tone of ideality breathing over the whole, and giving a saddened charm even to the suggestion of a watery

grave,—all this, and much more, independent of the beautiful picturesqueness of the scenery, render the poem of "Ulysses" one of the most exquisite (as it has hitherto been one of the least noticed) poems in the language.

It would be impossible to give that full consideration to the extraordinary poem of "St. Simeon Stylites," which as a work of genius it merits, without entering into complexities of the passions, mind, and human character, under the excitement and involuntary as well as wilful hallucinations of fanaticism, for which we could afford no adequate space. We must content ourselves with saying that it is a great and original "study."

There are no qualities in Tennyson more characteristic than those of delicacy and refinement. How very few are the poets who could equally well have dealt with the visible loveliness of the story of "Godiva,"—we say visible, as distinguished from the deeper loveliness of heart which gave her courage to go through such a trial.

"Not only we, the latest seed of Time,
New men, that in the flying of a wheel
Cry down the past, not only we, that prate
Of rights and wrongs, have loved the people well,
And loathed to see them overtaxed; but she
Did more, and underwent, and overcame,
The woman of a thousand summers back, &c.

* * * *

So left alone, the passions of her mind,
As winds from all the compass shift and blow,
Made war upon each other for an hour,
Till pity won.

* * * * * *

Then fled she to her inmost bower, and there
Unclasped the wedded eagles of her belt,
The grim Earl's gift; but ever at a breath
She lingered, looking like a summer moon
Half-dipt in cloud: anon she shook her head,
And showered the rippled ringlets to her knee;
Unclad herself in haste; adown the stair
Stole on; and like a creeping sunbeam, slid
From pillar unto pillar, until she reached
The gateway, &c."

The mind which can force up a vital flower of ideality through the heavy fermenting earth of human experiences, must have a deep intellectual root and active life. Among these experiences we must of course include those inner struggles of the soul with its own thoughts; dealings with the revelations that seem to come from other states of existence; difficult contests between the mortal promptings and resistances that breed so many doubts and hopes, and things inscrutable; and thoughts that often present themselves in appalling whispers, against the will and general tone and current of the mind. Tennyson's intellectual habit is of great strength; his thoughts can grow with large progressive purpose

either up or down, and the peculiarity is that in him they commonly do so to "a haunting music." No argument was ever conducted in verse with more admirable power and clearness than that of the "Two Voices." The very poetry of it magnifies itself into a share of the demonstration: take away the poetry and the music, and you essentially diminish the logic.

Though Tennyson often writes, or rather sings apparently from his own personality, you generally find that he does not refer to himself, but to some imaginary person. He permits the reader to behold the workings of his individuality, only by its reflex action. He comes out of himself to sing a poem, and goes back again; or rather sends his song out from his shadow under the leaf, as other nightingales do; and refuses to be expansive to his public, opening his heart on the hinges of music, as other poets do. We know nothing of him except that he is a poet; and this, although it is something to be sure of, does not help us to pronounce distinctly upon what may be called the mental intention of his poetry.

Whatever he writes is a complete work: he holds the unity of it as firmly in his hand as his Œnone's Paris holds the apple — and there is nothing broken or incomplete in his two full volumes. His few "fragments" are entire in themselves, and suggest the remainder. But for all this unity of every

separate poem produced by him, there is, or appears to be, some vacillation of intention, in his poetry as a mass. To any question upon the character of his early works, the reply rises obviously,—they are from dream-land; and of the majority of those which he has since produced, the same answer should be returned. The exceptive instances are like those of one who has not long awakened from his Dreams. But what dreams these have been—of what loveliness of music, form, and colour, and what thoughtfulness — our foregoing remarks have very faintly expressed and declared. In the absence of any marked and perceptible design in his poetical faith and purposes, Tennyson is not singular. It would be equally difficult to decide the same question with regard to several others; nor perhaps is it necessary to be decided. As the matter rests in this instance, we have the idea of a poet (his volumes in our hands) who is not in a fixed attitude; not resolute as to means, not determined as to end—sure of his power, sure of his activity, but not sure of his objects. There appears to be some want of the sanctification of a spiritual consistency; or a liability at intervals to resign himself to the "Lotos Eaters." We seem to look on, while a man stands in preparation for some loftier course—while he tries the edge of his various arms and examines the wheels of his chariots, and meditates, full of youth and capability, down the

long slope of glory. He constantly gives us the impression of something greater than his works. And this must be his own soul. He may do greater things than he has yet done; but we do not expect it. If he do no more, he has already done enough to deserve the lasting love and admiration of posterity.

Alfred Tennyson is the son of a clergyman of Lincolnshire. He went through the usual routine of a University education at Trinity College, Cambridge. He has brothers and sisters living, who are all possessed of superior attainments. Avoiding general society, he would prefer to sit up all night talking with a friend, or else to sit "and think alone." Beyond a very small circle he is never to be met. There is nothing eventful in his biography, of a kind which would interest the public; and wishing to respect the retirement he unaffectedly desires, we close the present paper.

T. B. MACAULAY.

"Arma, virumque, &c."

VIRGIL.

"Yes, from the records of my youthful state,
And from the lore of bards and sages old,
From whatsoe'er my wakened thoughts create,
* * * * * * *
Have I collected language to unfold
Truth to my countrymen."

SHELLEY.

"And in triumphant chair was set on high
The ancient glorie of the Roman peers."

SPENSER.

T. B. MACAULAY.

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY is the son of Zachary Macaulay, well known as the friend of Wilberforce, and, though himself an African merchant, one of the most ardent abolitionists of slavery. In 1818, T. B. Macaulay became a member of Trinity College, Cambridge. He distinguished himself as a student, having obtained a scholarship, twice gained the Chancellor's medal for English verse, and also gained the second Craven Scholarship, the highest honour in classics which the University confers. He took his Bachelor's degree in 1822. Owing to his dislike of mathematics, he did not compete for honours at graduation, but nevertheless he obtained a Fellowship at the October competition open to graduates of Trinity, which he appears to have resigned before his subsequent departure for India. He devoted much of his time

to the "Union" debating Society, where he was reckoned an eloquent speaker.

Mr. Macaulay studied at Lincoln's Inn, and was called to the bar in 1826. In the same year his "Essay on Milton" appeared in the "Edinburgh Review;" and out of Lord (then Mr.) Jeffrey's admiration of that paper, arose an intimate friendship. Macaulay, visiting Scotland soon afterwards, went the circuit with Mr. Jeffrey. His connection with the "Edinburgh Review" has continued at intervals ever since.

By the Whig administration Mr. Macaulay was appointed Commissioner of Bankrupts. He commenced his parliamentary career about the same period, as member for Colne in the Reform Parliament of 1832, and again for Leeds in 1834, at which time he was secretary to the India Board. His seat was, however, soon relinquished, for in the same year he was appointed member of the Supreme Council in Calcutta, under the East India Company's new charter.

Arriving in Calcutta, in September, 1834, Mr. Macaulay shortly assumed an important trust in addition to his seat at the Council. At the request of the Governor-General, Lord William Bentinck, he became President of the commission of five, appointed to frame a penal code for India; and the principal provisions of this code have been attributed to him. One of its enactments, in particular, was

so unpopular among the English inhabitants, as to receive the appellation of the "Black Act." It abolished the right of appeal from the Local Courts to the Supreme Court at the Presidency, hitherto exclusively enjoyed by Europeans, and put them on the same footing with natives, giving to both an equal right of appeal to the highest Provincial Courts. Inconvenience and delay of justice had been caused by the original practice, even when India was closed against Europeans in general, but such practice was obviously incompatible with the rights and property of the natives under the new system of opening the country to general resort. This measure of equal justice, however, exposed Mr. Macaulay, to whom it was universally attributed, to outrageous personal attacks in letters, pamphlets, and at public meetings.

The various reforms and changes instituted by Lord W. Bentinck and Lord Auckland, were advocated in general by Mr. Macaulay. He returned to England in 1838.

Mr. Macaulay was elected member for Edinburgh on the liberal interest in 1839; and being appointed Secretary at War, he was re-elected the following year, and again at the general election in 1841. No review of his political career is here intended; although in relation to literature, it should be mentioned that he opposed Mr. Serjeant Talfourd's Copy-

right Bill, and was the principal agent in defeating it. As a public speaker, he usually displays extensive information, close reasoning, and eloquence; and has recently bid fair to rival the greatest names among our English orators. His conversation in private is equally brilliant and instructive.

Mr. Macaulay may fairly be regarded as the first critical and historical essayist of the time. It is not meant to be inferred that there are not other writers who display as much understanding and research, as great, perhaps greater capacity of appreciating excellence, as much acuteness and humour, and a more subtle power of exciting, or of measuring, the efforts of the intellect and the imagination, besides possessing an equal mastery of language in their own peculiar style; but there is no other writer who combines so large an amount of all those qualities, with the addition of a mastery of style, at once highly classical and most extensively popular. His style is classical, because it is so correct; and it is popular because it must be intelligible without effort to every educated understanding.

In the examination of the "Critical and Historical Essays" of Mr. Macaulay, it would have been our wish, as the most genial and agreeable proceeding, to commence with that unqualified admiration which so large a portion of his labours justly merits. But unfortunately he has written a "Preface." It

scarcely occupies two pages, yet presents a stumbling-block in our course; and, in that spirit of free discussion adopted by Mr. Macaulay himself throughout his volumes, he will pardon our stating certain objections which we cannot quietly overcome in our own minds.

"The author of these Essays is so sensible of their defects, that he has repeatedly refused to let them appear in a form which might seem to indicate that he thought them worthy of a permanent place in English literature. Nor would he now give his consent to the republication of pieces so imperfect, if, by withholding his consent, he could make republication impossible. But as they have been reprinted more than once in the United States," &c.

Preface.

This, therefore, being unfortunately the state of affairs, of course we expect to be told that the author has now carefully revised productions which he had been so anxious to suppress from a sense of their incompleteness.

"No attempt has been made to remodel any of the pieces which are contained in these volumes. Even the criticism on Milton, which was written when the author was fresh from college, and *which contains scarcely a paragraph such as his matured judgment approves*, still remains overloaded with gaudy and ungraceful ornament."

Preface.

Nevertheless, in this condition Mr. Macaulay reprints his Essays, now that, whether willingly or unwillingly, he sends them forth in the form which authors adopt who think their works worthy of a

permanent place in literature. An odd compliment, by the way, to the admiration expressed by Lord Jeffrey, of this very paper. How are we to proceed? The critical author has placed all his fraternity in a very anomalous, not to say rather grotesque position. For if we object to anything, especially in the essay on Milton, the author will have been before-hand with us—he *knew* all that himself; and if we admire anything, he may smile and say, "Ah, I thought pretty well of it myself when I was a very young man."

But these Essays have gone forth to do their work in the world, and the Essay on Milton, among the rest, will exercise its appointed degree of influence; though it "contains scarcely a paragraph such as the author's mature judgment approves"—and, we will venture to add, contains certain positions which are likely to be very mischievous to the popular mind.

We will proceed as though no Preface had been written. Our objections shall not meddle with the style, nor do we think its redundancy of ornament so prominent an annoyance as the author intimates. Our objections are of a more serious nature; founded on confused views of truth and fiction, of reality and ideality, and leading directly to the question of whether Shakspere and Milton ought to be regarded in any respect as lunatics.

"Perhaps no person can be a poet, or can ever enjoy poetry, with-

out a certain *unsoundness of mind*, if anything which gives so much pleasure ought to be called unsoundness."

Essays, vol. i. p. 7.

The position is guarded and qualified, in the above quotation, but presently it comes out in all its fulness. The author, be it understood, explains that he means poetry, impassioned and imaginative poetry; not mere verse-making, but poetry of the highest order. And what the world has been hitherto accustomed to regard in the light of an inspiration, the essayist wishes to teach us to consider as the product of an unsound mind. It is even catching, and those who read may rave. "The greatest of poets," he says, "has described it in lines which are valuable on account of the just notion which they convey of the art in which he excelled:

> "As imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name."

Now all this, which so palpably implies creative power, suggests to the essayist an unsound creator.

"These are the fruits of the 'fine frenzy' which he ascribes to the poet—a fine frenzy, doubtless, but still a frenzy. Truth, indeed, is essential to poetry; but it is the truth of madness."

Ibid. p. 8.

Surely the young essayist must have heard of the "nor'-west madness?" But he suffered himself

to be misled by the imperfect comparison with the reasonings of mad people, "which are just; but the premises are false." A few lines farther on, observing how much "a little girl is affected by the story of poor Red Riding-hood" he adds—"*She knows that it is all false,* that wolves cannot speak, that there are no wolves in England. Yet in spite of her knowledge she believes, she weeps, she trembles," &c. That is the point. There is no madness in the matter; those who *are* mad, do not know that their premises are false. With respect to poetry, it is no unsoundness of mind; but the surrendering up of the feelings to certain operations of the mind,—which happens in other things besides poetry, and no one thinks of calling it madness. After this, come the usual remarks about "the despotism of the imagination over *uncultivated* minds" (Greece and Rome for instance?) the "rude state of society," and the influence of poetry dwindling with the "improvements" of civilisation, but "lingering longest among the peasantry,"—all of whom are excessively addicted to Wordsworth and Shelley. Finally, "as the light of knowledge breaks in upon its exhibitions"—

> "The hues and lineaments of the phantoms which the poet calls up, grow fainter and fainter. We cannot unite the incompatible advantages of reality and deception, the clear discernment of truth and the exquisite enjoyment of fiction."
>
> *Ibid.* p. 9.

As if what is called "fiction" involved no truth—no

realities!—as if there were not a larger amount of truth in fiction than in any *known* reality. Moreover, we are told, and truly (in the Essay on "Moore's Life of Lord Byron," Vol. I. page 332), that "the heart of man is the province of poetry, and of poetry alone." With madness, therefore, at heart, as well as in the head, we are in a pretty condition! It could hardly have been on this account that Lord Jeffrey was so pleased with the essay. Entertaining, as we do, the most unaffected respect for the "mature judgment" of Mr. Macaulay, and a sincere admiration of his great powers and acquirements, we must be permitted to express our regret—all the more strongly for that very respect and admiration—that he did not think fit to exercise them in revising the crude philosophy of a young gentleman "fresh from college," instead of sending it abroad to do its work of injurious influence upon the mind of our not very *finely* frenzied public—a public of itself, by no means disposed to regard poets or their works with too much estimation, except as matter of national boasting. Once convince and fortify John Bull in the opinion that to read poetry and cultivate his imaginative faculties will render him liable to aberration of mind, and it is all over with him, and the poets. He has half suspected this for a long time: his unsoundness is already on the other side. Or does our classic Essayist and right Roman lyrist

make an exception in favour of the mental soundness of Songs of the Sword — of bards and readers on war-steeds—of statesmen who write poetry in steel helmets?

In the same essay we are also obliged to object to the remark that the Prometheus of Æschylus "bears undoubtedly a considerable resemblance to the Satan of Milton," because "in both we find the *same* impatience of control, the *same ferocity*, the *same* unconquerable pride." At page 348 of this volume, we also find a comparison made with some of the Byronic heroes "who are sick of life, who are at war with society, who are supported in their anguish *only* by an unconquerable pride, *resembling* that of Prometheus on the rock, or of Satan in the burning marl," &c. Here we find individual ambition and morbid dissatisfaction confounded with the loftiest sympathies—demoniac pride with the pride of the Champion of Humanity. On the other hand we have, elsewhere* an equal extravagance in the way of eulogium, when the "harsh, dark features of the Earl of Strafford" are said to have been "ennobled by their expression into *more* than the majesty of an antique Jupiter,"—as though there could be any comparison between the finest practical head, and

* In the Essay on "Lord Nugent's Memorials of Hampden," vol. i. pp. 450, 1, 2, where Strafford, the same more than superhumanly majestic nobleman, is fairly shown to have been an avaricious and despotic renegade.

the finest ideal one, which could be fair towards either.

Let it not be supposed, however, that we do not find much to admire in the essay on Milton — hazardous as such a declaration may be, after what the author has himself said of it. Having duly deliberated, however, we will venture to express great admiration of the passages on "revolution" at pp. 39, 40, 41; (which we commend to Sir E. L. Bulwer's especial attention) and also of the character of Cromwell, at p. 45, 46—which we commend to the especial attention of the "authority," who seems to be so short-sighted as to contemplate the exclusion of all pictorial recognition of the Commonwealth from the new Houses of Parliament.*

Few essays were ever sent abroad in the world more calculated to improve the public understanding, and direct its moral feelings aright, than those on "Moore's Life of Byron;" "Machiavelli," and "Boswell's Life of Johnson." They contain many passages of sterling philosophy in the analysis and elucidation of character, in principles and conditions of public and private morality, and in matters of literary taste; all of which are set forth with unanswerable arguments and admirable illustrations. Among the latter we cannot forbear noticing the equally acute and amusing remarks on the hypocritical public horror at Lord Byron's sepa-

* February the 22nd.

ration from his wife, and because Edmund Kean "had disturbed the conjugal felicity of an alderman,"—common occurrences, of which the world takes no sort of notice beyond the newspaper paragraphs of the day, except about once in seven years, and then "the public decency requires a victim." His remarks on Dr. Johnson are excellent, and while they do every justice to all the good qualities of the "great man" of his day, will materially assist in leading the public mind at last to perceive how constantly Dr. Johnson, in philosophy, in morals, and in criticism, was quite as wrong as he was pompous and overbearing.

The article on Warren Hastings is a model of biography. It is biography of the most difficult kind; that, namely, in which the character and actions of the individual subject cannot be portrayed without a comprehensive history of the times in which he lived. Such writings are apt to be exceedingly tedious, and in fact to present a mixture of two styles of composition, that of the historian and that of the biographer, fitted together as they best may be. But in the case before us, while the state of the political world, the progress of events, the aspects of parties, the peculiar condition of the great continent of India, the characteristics of its various races, are all presented distinctly, and held constantly before the mind as they in succession change,

swell into importance, or fade into obscurity, in the onward march of time;—so, with equal distinctness and constancy, is the individual Warren Hastings always held present to the imagination, as those events, and scenes, and characteristics acted upon him, or he acted upon them. The man stands revealed in this clear picture of his circumstances and his actions. We do not require to be told what was the peculiar nature of his intellect, his moral perceptions, his temperament. These we deduce from the history; any occasional remark upon him in the way of metaphysical analysis we read as a corollary, and can only say, 'just so,' or 'of course.' Perhaps a skilful physiognomist might even pronounce on the features of his face after reading the whole. With the same skill as that displayed in presenting the history of his time, the men who surrounded him are brought on the scene.

Of the masterly essay on "Lord Bacon" we must content ourselves with saying that it is in itself a great work of harmoniously united history, biography, and criticism, each of the highest class, and of which there is not a single page without its weight and value.

Mr. Macaulay possesses great powers of logical criticism; a fine and manly taste and judgment; a quick sense of the absurd, with an acute perception of the illogical; great fairness, and love of truth

and justice. His prose is a model of style. It is sculpturesque by its clearness, its solidity, its simplicity, without any mannerism or affectation, and by its regularity. But this regularity is not of marble equability; the strong and compacted sentences rather presenting the appearance of a Cyclopean wall, with the outer surface polished. Continually the matter is of similar character with this style, and a brief section contains the growth of ages. Many single sentences might be adduced, in which are compressed clearly and without crowding, the sum of prolonged historical records, their chief events and most influential men, and how the events and the men acted and re-acted upon each other.

Mr. Macaulay has great and singular ability in making difficult questions clear, and the most unpromising subjects amusing. A good example of this may be found in his review of "Southey's Colloquies on Society," where Macaulay displays Southey's errors and wrong-headedness, and what the true state of the case is with respect to the currency, the national debt, and finance,—subjects which Literature had always considered as dry and impracticable as a rope of sand, but which in Mr. Macaulay's hands become not only intelligible and instructive, but incredibly entertaining.

Notwithstanding the many excellent remarks on poets and poetical productions, occurring in the

course of his volumes—and the acuteness displayed, not only in what Mr. Macaulay says of the so-called "correctness" of Pope, and Addison, and Gray, (as though their descriptions of men and external nature were not far less correct than those of the Elizabethan poets), but in the more admiring tone he occasionally takes,—it might still have been doubted whether a writer, in whom the understanding faculty predominates, would be able to make that degree of surrender of its power, which the fullest appreciation of poetry requires. He might fear it would argue "unsoundness." Howbeit, in certain remarks on Shelley, we see that he can make the requisite surrender to one, whose poetry, of all others, needs it, in order to be rightly estimated. And it is a part of the means of forming the best *judgment* of poetical productions to know when, and how far that faculty should *abandon itself*, and receive a dominant emotion as fresh material for subsequent judgment.

The last publication of Mr. Macaulay—his "Lays of Ancient Rome"—may fairly be called, not an exhumation of decayed materials, but a reproduction of classical vitality. The only thing we might object to, is the style and form of his metres and rhythms, which are not classical, but Gothic, and often remind us of the "Percy Reliques." There is no attempt to imitate the ancient metres. In other respects these Lays are Roman to the back-bone; and

where not so, they are Homeric. The events and subjects of the poems are chosen with an heroic spirit; there is all the hard glitter of steel about the lines!—their music is the neighing of steeds, and the tramp of armed heels; their inspiration was the voice of a trumpet.

"And nearer fast and nearer
Doth the red whirlwind come;
And louder still and still more loud,
From underneath that rolling cloud,
Is heard the trumpet's war-note proud,
The trampling, and the hum.
And plainly and more plainly
Now through the gloom appears,
Far to left and far to right,
In broken gleams of dark-blue light,
The long array of helmets bright,
The long array of spears."

* * * *

"And backward now and forward
Wavers the deep array;
And on the tossing sea of steel,
To and fro the standards reel;
And the victorious trumpet-peal
Dies fitfully away."

HORATIUS.

THOMAS HOOD

AND THE LATE

THEODORE HOOK.

" Or send to us
Thy wit's great overplus:
But teach us yet
Wisely to husband it;
Lest we that talent spend:
And having once brought to an end
That precious stock; the store
Of such a wit: the world should have no more."

HERRICK.

" Have gentility, and scorn every man!"

BEN JONSON.

" And laughter oft is but an art
To drown the outcry of the heart."

HARTLEY COLERIDGE.

" Act freely, carelessly, and capriciously; as if our veins ran with quicksilver; and not utter a phrase but what shall come forth steeped in the very brine of conceit, and sparkle like salt in fire."

BEN JONSON, *Cynthia's Revels.*

THOMAS HOOD

AND THE LATE

THEODORE HOOK.

THERE are some writers, whose popularity has been so long established, is so well deserved, and about the character of whose genius there is so correct a general impression in the mind of the public, that very little more need be said about them. But these are few in number. For, although it is not uncommon for the majority to be tolerably unanimous in its opinion of a favourite, it certainly very rarely occurs that such opinion is so perfectly satisfactory as to leave no opportunity and no wish to offer any further comment upon the individual or his works. Such, however, is the case with regard to Thomas Hood; and, almost in an equal degree, to the late Theodore Hook, though the men are very different. We shall do little more, therefore, than endeavour to arrange and illustrate in a compact form, what we believe to be the popular impressions of both.

Mr. Hood possesses an original wealth of humour, invention, and an odd sort of wit that should rather be called whimsicality, or a faculty of the "high fantastic." Among comic writers he is one of those who also possess genuine pathos; it is often deep, and of much tenderness, occasional sweetness of expression, and full of melancholy memories. The predominating characteristics of his genius are humorous fancies grafted upon melancholy impressions. It is a curious circumstance, that in his "Whims and Oddities," of bygone years, the majority of them, by far, turned upon some painful physicality. A boy roaring under the rod—a luckless individual being thrown over a horse's head—an old man with his night-cap on fire—a clergyman with his wig accidently caught off his head by a pitch-fork—a man pursued by a bull,—skeletons, death, duels—cats with mice, dogs with kettles—&c. These are the kind of things (we do not recollect if all these are actually in his books) in which his annual presents abounded. Nobody who takes a second look at any of these can feel them in a very jocular sense. If at all considered, they cease to be pleasurable. In the very first article of his "Magazine" recently published, there is a morbid energy of desolation and misery for the love of those things, and there is no story to relieve the feelings. A ghost or goblin of any kind would have been a

real comfort. "The Haunted House" is a wonderful production for its prolonged inspiration of wretchedness and squalid catalogue of ruin. Such are Hood's latent characteristics, at all events; but the more obvious features are those of humour, and a most ingenious eccentricity. His fancies often bear an appearance of being studied, and seem to have arisen from the mind of a thoughtful humourist. Still, they are unaffected, and like himself. The fertility of his wit has chiefly been displayed in the application of his most erratic fancies to the current topics of the day, its men and manners, its sayings and doings, its ignorances and illiberalities. Mr. Hood is almost exclusively known as a comic writer, and his "Plea of the Midsummer Fairies" is little read in comparison; nevertheless, his songs and lyrical compositions have much sweetness, refinement, and tender melancholy, and he has written several ballads of deep, heart-probing pathos,—such as the "Song of a Shirt," and the "Bridge of Sighs." His prose and his verse equally illustrate his tendency to serious and pathetic writing. Though the touches of sadness are generally brief, and at unexpected seasons, Mr. Hood has still shown himself capable of writing a long narrative of serious interest and sustained purpose — carried on clear through the very thick of the crossfire of puns, jokes, and extravaganzas—and con-

vinced us that had he pleased (or had he possessed less versatility) he would have taken a permanent position among the highest class of English novelists,—if his "Tylney Hall" does not already entitle him to this rank. It will be recognized as a work of genius, when hundreds of novels which have been popular since its publication, have lined trunks, and the trunks been burnt for fire-wood.

Theodore Hook possessed both wit and humour, and told a story well. Though not without passion, the tendency was rather towards the evil passions than the ennobling. He could make a forcible appeal to the feelings, but it involved no fine principle. He had great graphic powers in the ridiculous, and a surprising readiness of invention, or novel application. But his wit was generally malicious, and his humour satirical. If he made a sharp hit at an individual peculiarity, the point generally went through into human nature. You could not help laughing, but were generally ashamed of yourself for having laughed. The objects of his satire were seldom the vices or follies of mankind; but generally their misfortunes, or manners, or unavoidable disadvantages, whether of a physical or intellectual kind. A poor man with his mutton bone, was a rich meal for his comic muse; and he was convulsed at the absurdity of high principles in rags, or at all needy. He never made fun of a lord.

He would as soon have taken the King of Terrors pickaback, as made fun of a lord. He was at the head of that unfortunately large class, who think that a brilliant sally of wit, or fancy, at any cost of truth or feeling, is not only the best thing in society, but the best proof of sterling genius; and that one of the finest tests of a dashing fellow of spirit is to steal clothes, *i. e.* not pay a tailor's bill;—nor any other bill that can be helped, it might be added. Mr. Hook* was a wit about town, and a philosopher while recovering from "the effects of last night." His writings tended to give an unfavourable view of human nature, to make one suspicious and scornful. On the whole, though you had been amused and interested as you went on, you were left uncomfortable, and wished you could forget what you had read.

Both these writers possess very great mastery of comic expression, and characteristic felicity of versification and of rhyming. In addition to this, there was a novel feature introduced by Hood in his annuals, which often had an extremely ludicrous effect —viz. that of drawings in illustration, made by one who *had* "the idea," but no knowledge or ability in drawing. Since Hood really could draw, his per-

* In the first Edition, the name of Mr. Hood, by a mistake of the last letter, was misprinted for that of Mr. Hook. The error was most kindly and humorously noticed by Mr. Hood in his "Magazine."

formances in this way must be regarded as all the more ingenious. The most extraordinary attitudes and intentions, and the most difficult foreshortenings, were boldly attempted after the fashion of a child on a slate, but with a determined, unmisgiving, mind's eye, and apparently the most self-complaisant result. They were often quite irresistible. It is not, at the same time, to be denied that they continually gave you a very uncomfortable sensation.

We could not, perhaps, convey a much better notion of Mr. Hook's style of writing, and of his actual habits of life, than in the following quotation from the Second Series of "Sayings and Doings:"—

"What's the hour?" said George.

"Past six," answered his friend; "so go: sleep off your sorrow, and I and Wilson will settle the order of the day."

"By the way," said George, "we have something particular for to-day."

"Particular!" answered Dyson; "indeed have we—there's the Fives Court at one—at four the dear Countess—'gad how she did eat, this last past night of her joyous life."

"And *drink* too," interrupted George.

"She never refuses Roman punch," observed Dyson, "I never saw a freer creature in *that* line in my life: to be sure she is dreadfully under-rated; her cousin they say is a tallowchandler; and, upon my life, I never sit near her but I fancy I smell the moulds."

"Hang the moulds!" said George: "she is good-natured, and I ike her."

"The good nature arises from her good set of teeth," said Dyson: "if ever you want laughers, George, to make up a party, study the ivory. Be sure your guests have good teeth and they'll laugh at the

worst story of a dinner-going wit, rather than not show the 'white and even.' Never mind; at four we go to the Countess, at six we try a new off-leader, at seven I have a short call to make in the New Road, and at eight we all dine here. After *that*, trust to chance: by the way, George, before you go to bed, I'll trouble you to lend me a couple of hundred pounds."

"To be sure," said George, turning to his prime minister, who was waiting; "Wilson, let Mr. Dyson have what he wants."

"Sir!" exclaimed Wilson.

"Don't scold me, Mr. Wilson," said his master: "my friend Dyson must *not* be refused; so good night, most worthy Arthur." Saying which the master of the house retired to rest, escorted by his body-servant, Monsieur Duval.

"Now, Wilson," said Mr. Dyson, "the money if you please, at your earliest convenience."

"Money, Sir?" said Wilson.

"Yes, money, Mr. Wilson," repeated the young worthy; "why, you stare as if I asked you to pay the national debt; I only want you to give me two hundreds of pounds."

"I could do the one as easily as the other," answered the man.

"Why, you keep your master's purse, Mr. Wilson?"

The Man of Many Friends.

So much for the knowledge and experience of fashionable life, its follies, extravagancies, and "principles" of conduct. Let us turn to something more kindly from the pages of Hood. We can hardly do better than turn to the First Series of "Whims and Oddities," and the first thing that meets our eye is "Moral Reflections on the Cross of St. Paul's:"—

"And what is life? and all its ages—
There's seven stages!

Turnham Green! Chelsea! Putney! Fulham!
Brentford! and Kew!
And Tooting, too!
And oh! what very little nags to pull 'em.
Yet each would seem a horse indeed,
If here at Paul's tip-top we'd got 'em;
Although, like Cinderella's breed,
They're mice at bottom.
Then let me not despise a horse,
Though he looks small from Paul's high cross!
Since he would be,—as near the sky,
—Fourteen hands high.

"What is this world with London in its lap?
Mogg's Map.
The Thames, that ebbs and flows in its broad channel?
A *tidy* kennel.
The bridges stretching from its banks?
Stone planks.
Oh me! hence could I read an admonition
To mad Ambition!
But that he would not listen to my call,
Though I should stand upon the cross, and *ball!*"

Mr. Hood's sympathies are with humanity; they are not often genial, because of a certain grotesque sadness that pervades them, but they are always kindly. He is liberal-minded, and of an independent spirit. His inner life is clearly displayed by his various writings. Mr. Hook had no sympathies with humanity for its own sake, but only as developed and modified by aristocratic circumstances and fashion-

able tastes. He was devoted to splendid externals. He may be said to have had no inner life—except that the lofty image of a powdered footman, with golden aiguillettes and large white calves, walked with a great air up and down the silent avenues of his soul. But the life of animal spirits, Hook possessed in an eminent degree. They appeared inexhaustible, and being applied as a sort of "steam" or laughing gas to set in motion his invention and all its fancies, and his surprising faculty of extemporaneous song-making, it is no wonder that his company was so much in request, and that he was regarded as such a delightful time-killer and incentive to wine by the "high bloods of the upper circles." He made them laugh at good things, and forget themselves. He also made them drink. Thus are red herrings and anchovies used. Sad vision of a man of genius, as Hook certainly was, assiduously pickling his prerogative, and selling his birth-right for the hard and thankless servitude of pleasing idle hours and pampered vanities. The expenses, the debts, the secret drudgery, the splitting head-aches and heart's misery he incurred, in order to maintain his false position in these circles, are well known ; and furnish one more warning to men of genius and wit, of how dearly, how ruinously they have to *pay* for an invitation to a great dinner, and a smile from his Grace. The man of moderate means who usually dines at home, saves

money besides his independence; but the man who is always "dining out" let him look to his pocket, as well as his soul.

Mr. Hood, in private, offers a marked contrast to all that has been said of Theodore Hook. In nothing, perhaps, more than in this—that Hook was "audible, and full of vent," and Hood is habitually retiring and silent. Mr. Hood was originally intended for an engraver; but abandoned the profession, probably because a "graver" could not be found.

Mr. Hook displayed a dashing physique; Mr. Hood rather resembles a gentleman of a serious turn of mind, who is out of health. Within this unpromising outside and melancholic atmosphere, lie hidden, and on the watch,—a genius of quaint humour, a heart of strong emotions, and a spirit of kindliness towards all the world.

Very truly yours

H. Martineau.

HARRIET MARTINEAU

AND

MRS. JAMESON.

"Therefore she walks through the great city, veiled
In virtue's adamantine eloquence,
'Gainst scorn, and death, and pain, thus trebly mailed.
And blending in the smiles of that defence,
The serpent and the dove—Wisdom and Innocence."

REVOLT OF ISLAM.

" A thousand winged Intelligences daily
Shall be thy ministers.——
——— Thou shalt command all Arts,
As handmaids."

MICROCOSMUS.

" I meant the day-star should not brighter rise,
Nor lend like influence from its lucent seat;
I meant she should be courteous, facile, sweet,
Hating that solemn vice of greatness, pride;
I meant each softest virtue there should meet,
Fit in that softer bosom to reside:
Only a learned and a manly soul
I purposed her; that should, with even powers,
The rock, the spindle, and the shears controul
Of Destiny, and spin her own free hours."

BEN JONSON.

HARRIET MARTINEAU

AND

MRS. JAMESON.

HARRIET MARTINEAU, in whose powers of keen observation, clear thought, patient study, and untiring energy, guided always by singleness of purpose in the pursuit of truth, we should naturally have found promise of a long career of constantly progressive intellectual labour, has been, in a great measure, withdrawn by disabling illness from the active course which from her youth she had worthily pursued. Had it been otherwise, a review of the character of her mind and writings must have been conducted as only an examination of one portion of their manifestations, and must have been prophetic as well as retrospective. As it is, it must bear something of the impress of finality. Yet it will not be worthy of its subject if on that account it is tinged with regret or complaint. In her consistent and well-ordered mind, nothing akin to such a feeling has found a place. We

did not require to be told that she has endured the ordeal, peculiarly hard to one of her active habits, with cheerfulness, courage, and faith in "the soul of goodness in things evil;" but we hardly expected to learn from various sources that every interval to pain is still employed in kindly and valuable services for private or public good. The works she has published since her illness have been addressed, for the most part, to the young, and are written in a tone of entire sympathy with their buoyant life. All this shows a singular freshness of spirit maintained throughout the languor and suffering of the bodily frame. The moral influence emanating from her sick room, and hitherto exerted over the circle of her friends, has by her volume of essays just published, extended itself more widely. Of this beautiful volume we shall speak in its place. It is a pathetic illustration of the way in which

"They also serve who only stand and wait."

Harriet Martineau was born in the year 1802, one of the youngest among a family of eight children. Her father was a proprietor of one of the manufactories in Norwich, in which place his family, originally of French origin, had resided since the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. She has herself ascribed her taste for literary pursuits to the extreme delicacy of her health in childhood; to the infirmity

(deafness) with which she has been afflicted ever since, which without being so complete as to deprive her of intercourse with the world, yet obliged her to seek occupations and pleasures within herself; and to the affection which subsisted between her and the brother nearest her own age, the Rev. James Martineau, whose fine mind and talents are well known. The occupation of writing, first begun to gratify her own taste and inclination, became afterwards to her a source of honourable independence, when by one of the disasters so common in trade, her family was involved in misfortunes. She was then enabled to reverse the common lot of unmarried daughters in such circumstances, and cease to be in any respects a burthen. She realized an income sufficient for her simple habits, but still so small as to enhance the integrity of the sacrifice which she made to principle in refusing the Pension offered to her in 1840. Her motive for refusing it, was, that the offer did not emanate publicly from Parliament, but privately from the Minister.

The list of works published by Harriet Martineau is sufficient of itself to prove her great industry and perseverance in a course once begun. It will be seen that she published early in life, and that the series of her works proceeds with scarcely a break, year by year, onward to the period of her illness. Full as it is, it does not comprehend her numerous contribu-

tions to periodical literature, some of which are among the most valuable of her compositions.*

From these works, the authoress would doubtless, like all those who have published early in life, gladly expunge some of the earliest. Yet there is not one among them which is out of keeping with the rest. All are written with a moral aim, in some higher, in others lower, but always apparent; all are remarkable for a free, clear, and unaffected style, which in her later productions is admirable from its lucid distinctness and simple force; and the whole taken together evince a continual improveability and progression, an undoubted sign of the possession on the part of the writer, of a mind open to and earnest for truth.

* The list is as follows:— 1823: "Devotional Exercises, for the use of Young Persons."— 1824 & 5: "Christmas Day, or the Friends," a tale. "The Friends." Second Part.— 1826: "Principle and Practice," a tale. "The Rioters." "Addresses, Prayers, and Original Hymns."— 1827: "Mary Campbell," a tale. "The Turn Out," a tale.— 1829: "Sequel to Principle and Practice," a tale. Tracts, for Houlston. "My Servant Rachel," a tale.— 1830: "Traditions of Palestine." "The Essential Faith of the Universal Church," (Prize Essay.) "Five Years of Youth," a tale.— 1831: "The Faith as unfolded by many Prophets," (Prize Essay.) "Providence as manifested through Israel," (Prize Essay.)— 1832, 3, & 4: "Illustrations of Political Economy," "Illustrations of Taxation," tales. "Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated," tales.

In this interval Miss Martineau went to America.—

1837: "Society in America."— 1838: "Retrospect of Western Travel." "Letter to the Deaf." "How to observe Morals and Manners." "The Maid of All Work," (Guide to Service.) "The Lady's Maid."— 1839: "Deerbrook," a novel. "The Housemaid," (Guide to Service.)— 1840: "The Dressmaker," with technical aid. (Guide to Trade.) "The Hour and the Man," a Romance.— 1841: "The Playfellow," 4 vols. viz.; "The Settlers at Home." "The Peasant and the Prince." "Feats on the Fiord." "The Crofton Boys."

The year 1830 marks an epoch in the mind we are studying: the works from that period assume a higher tone, and have in general a higher aim. The "Traditions of Palestine" was a beautiful conception, executed in a spirit of love and poetry which throws a charm over its pages. The period in which Jesus Christ fulfilled his mission on earth, the people among whom he dwelt, the scenes in which he moved, the emotions he awakened, the thoughts he kindled, all are portrayed in a series of descriptions; while He himself (with that true art which has in this instance been instilled by reverence) is never introduced in person. This little book must kindle pure and holy thoughts wherever it is read.

The three Prize Essays published in this and the following year by the Association of Unitarian Dissenters, to which Miss Martineau belongs, display some of the chief powers of her mind. At this period she began her contributions to the "Monthly Repository;" these were sometimes original essays, tales, or poetry; sometimes reviews of metaphysical or theological works. Among the most excellent, we may notice the "Essays on the Art of Thinking," on the "Religion of Socrates," and "True Worshippers;" but *above all*, the poem for the month of August, in a series by different authors, entitled "Songs of the Months."

All these literary labours were coincident with the

design which was afterwards accomplished in the "Illustrations of Political Economy." She has herself ascribed the original idea of this successful work to the reading of Mrs. Marcet's "Conversations on Political Economy" which made her perceive that in her own tales entitled the "Rioters" and "The Turn-Out," she had written political economy as M. Jourdain spoke prose, without knowing it. The question which thence presented itself, as to why all the doctrines of the science should not be equally well illustrated by fiction, was followed by a resolution to risk the publication of her Tales. The plan had been rejected by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. They could not see that any practical knowledge or truth was to be conveyed through the medium of fiction, which they regarded in all its forms as light reading, in direct opposition to weighty facts. The leading publishers, probably had a similar impression; and would not accept the work. At length one was found who undertook the enterprise, and at the end of a month complete success was certain. The books were in everybody's hands; the new number was watched for at the beginning of every month; edition was called for after edition; translations appeared in French, and German; the reputation of Harriet Martineau as an able writer, was established. Translations were also made into Spanish, Italian, Swedish and Dutch;

and they have been, ever since, the text-book at Copenhagen University.

This is not the place for an examination of the doctrines of political economy; nor would any such task be incumbent, even in a lengthened analysis of Miss Martineau's work. The task which she proposed to herself was to illustrate such parts of the fundamental doctrines of the science as lead to important practical results, adopting the doctrines as taught by the highest contemporary authorities. No one will deny the clearness and completeness of her illustration. Her correct interpretation of her authorities is questioned only on one point by a high authority, Mr. John Mill, in his review of her series. That point is her unqualified condemnation of the *principle* of a poor-law. "In this," says the reviewer, "she is decidedly behind the present state of the science." What this principle has effected in the working, is another matter. We should, however, conceive on the evidence of passages in her work on "America," relating to the competitive system and its necessary results, that she has subsequently abandoned her former views on this subject.

The stories, by means of which she illustrates her main points, are generally constructed admirably, and in this respect she displays an excellent and fertile invention. It was no slight undertaking to contrive an interesting plot bearing on twenty-four doctrines of

political economy; six more on taxation; and four more on poor-laws and paupers! But the majority of these stories really are interesting on their own account; some of them deeply so. We need only instance "Ireland" as perhaps the finest of all, and add that it was worthily companioned.

The choice of such a class of subjects gave rise to all manner of imputations. The "Quarterly Review," in especial, while enlarging on what did not appear to it as "feminine," certainly forgot what was gentlemanly. To most dispassionate inquirers, the choice will appear simply an evidence of the possession of a mind keenly alive to perceptions of all outward things; actively benevolent; observant of passing events, and of the wants and evils of the age; turning its attention, therefore, to studies bearing on those evils and their remedies; logical rather than creative; hopeful of good, therefore too ready at times to adopt a theory bearing a promise of good; and having embraced it, clear and acute in working it out:—too unshackled in spirit, too unaffected and simple-minded, to be deterred for a moment from putting forth to the world that which she had conceived of truth and wisdom, by any consideration of what this or the other organ might decide on the subject of feminine occupations; but that which she found to do, "doing it with her might."

Had it fallen within the province of the present undertaking to enter upon politics, we should have had much to say of the great influence exercised by Harriet Martineau privately as well as publicly, at home and abroad, in quarters little suspected. After the appearance of her first work on America, the late Swedish Prime Minister sent her a pressing invitation to make a visit to his country-house, near Stockholm, to consult with her how to unite such democracy as the Norwegians wanted, with Swedish institutions which could not be relinquished. The Emperor of Russia and the late Emperor of Austria proscribed her, and her name was denounced on the frontier. Nevertheless she has since been to Venice by the passport of a Secretary of State. Guizot once remarked, before his visit to England, that, in all history there was no preceding case of a woman having solid political influence otherwise than through some clever man.

"Society in America," written after the tour which Miss Martineau made in that country, is very valuable, as containing lucid descriptions by an accurate observer, with a most candid mind and a thirst after the truth. The book breathes of cheerfulness and hopefulness. She evidently enjoyed her residence among the Americans, and she has dwelt on their fine institutions, their grand country, their many advantages, as on a favourite

theme. Their lighter faults she has touched lightly; their graver errors with a melancholy earnestness. "Their civilization and morals," she says, "fall far below their own principle." This is enough to say. It is better than contrasting them with "European morals and civilization." This is undoubtedly the only philosophical view of the matter; and it is wiser to have faith like Harriet Martineau that the ideal standard set before them will elevate them to itself in time, than to reproach them with the discrepancy. It is no wonder that the subject is puzzling to us, who have outgrown our Institutions, and are obliged to maintain a continual struggle to bring them into something like harmony with our morals and civilization. Her chapters on slavery and its aspects have a solemnity of reprobation. On the other hand, the following passage contains a view of this subject which other nations are too apt to forget, and is a good instance of that clear-sightedness and candour which are so characteristic of the writer:—

"The nation must not be judged of by that portion whose worldly interests are involved in the maintenance of the anomaly; nor yet by the eight hundred flourishing abolition societies of the north, with all the supporters they have in unassociated individuals. The nation must be judged of as to Slavery by neither of these parties; but by the aspect of the conflict between them. If it be found that the five abolitionists who first met in a little chamber five years ago, to measure their moral strength against this national enormity, have become a host beneath whose assaults the vicious institution is rocking to its foundations, it is time that slavery was ceasing to be a national reproach. Europe now owes to America the justice of regarding her as

the country of abolitionism, quite as emphatically as the country of slavery."

Society in America, v. 3. p. 249.

Miss Martineau experienced insult and persecution in America for her abolition principles, some account of which, written in the most moderate and tolerant tone, will be found in her subsequent work, entitled "Retrospect of Western Travel." It may be observed that in this latter publication she predicted the future popularity of the genius of Emerson.

"Society in America" is as remarkable for its fearless outspoken tone as for its cheerful, hopeful and candid views of things. Among other subjects on which the opinions of the writer are freely stated, is that of the condition of women. Miss Martineau accuses the American Constitution of inconsistency in withholding from women political and social equality with men. She points out that while it proclaims in theory, the equal rights of all the human race (except the blacks) it excludes one-half of the human race from any political rights whatever; neither providing for their independence as holders of property, nor as controllers of legislation, although their interests are equally concerned in both with those of men.

A similarity of opinion on this question is to be found in the writings of Mrs. Jameson. Her delightful work, the "Characteristics of Women," may be said to have derived its origin from her strong feel-

ings concerning the imperfect institutions of society with regard to her own sex; and in her "Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada," she has explicitly and in eloquent terms stated her dissatisfaction, though she has rather called upon legislators to provide a remedy than pointed one out herself, except in her advocacy of a more enlarged and more enlightened system of education.

It is evident that these two fine-minded women have been led to the same opinions by totally different circumstances, and hence they hold them "with a difference." The calm temperament, clear intellect, and active energy of Harriet Martineau ensured to herself a moral independence; the intellectual society in which she moved encouraged it, and her logical head set her to the investigation of the causes which debarred the generality of women from the enjoyment of the healthy and cheerful tone of the inner life of which she was conscious herself. In her writings, therefore, we find no complaints; simply a recognition of existing evils, and an indication of their remedies. With Mrs. Jameson it is different. She sees more difficulties in the case. She knows by experience more of the complications, and is conscious of the mysterious links and sympathies by which the chains have been wound around that half of the human race to which she belongs. Her feelings have been awakened to the subject by experience of suffering; and looking round her, and

seeing how widely spread such suffering is, she points to the master passion whence she feels it springs, and to the evil at the root of the tree of life, with a cry for help which often sounds like a wail of despair;—

"Strange, and passing strange," she says, "that the relation between the two sexes, the passion of love in short, should not be taken into deeper consideration by our teachers and our legislators. People educate and legislate as if there was no such thing in the world; but ask the priest, ask the physician—let *them* reveal the amount of moral and physical results from this one cause. * * Must love be ever treated with profaneness, as a mere illusion? or with coarseness, as a mere impulse? or with fear, as a mere disease? or with shame, as a mere weakness? or with levity, as a mere accident? Whereas, it is a great mystery and a great necessity, lying at the foundation of human existence, morality, and happiness,—mysterious, universal, inevitable as death. Why then should love be treated less seriously than death? It is as serious a thing. * * * * * Death must come and love must come—but the state in which they find us?—whether blinded, astonished, and frightened, and ignorant, or, like reasonable creatures, guarded, prepared, and fit to manage our own feelings?—*this*, I suppose, depends on ourselves; and for want of such self-management and self-knowledge, look at the evils that ensue!—hasty, improvident, unsuitable marriages; repining, diseased, or vicious celibacy; irretrievable infamy; cureless insanity:—the death that comes early, and the love that comes late, reversing the primal laws of our nature."

Mrs. Jameson is well aware of the odium likely to fall upon any meddler with this subject, and thus humorously describes the danger she runs upon:—

"It is like putting one's hand into the fire, only to touch upon it; it is the universal bruise, the putrifying sore, on which you must not

lay a finger, or your patient (that is, society) cries out and resists; and, like a sick baby, scratches and kicks its physician."

Mrs. Jameson's "Canada," vol. 3. pp. 12, 13.

Mrs. Jameson is an established favourite with the public. She is an accomplished woman, an eloquent and no less elegant writer, and her refined taste and quick sensibility are good influences on her age. Her "Characteristics of Women" contain a searching analysis of character and fine criticism, such as ought to place her name among those of the greatest of the commentators of Shakspere. Her exposition of the character of Cordelia is, in especial, beautifully true; and her perception of the intensity, and strength, and real dignity of soul in Helena (in "All 's Well that Ends Well,") notwithstanding that the tenour of all the incidents and circumstances around her wound and shock, manifests the true power to look beyond the outward shows of things and read the heart. The "Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad" is a delightful book; accomplishing that rare task of rendering descriptions of works of art pleasant reading instead of dull catalogues. The authoress has also published the "Lives of Celebrated Female Sovereigns;" and "Explanatory Notes to the Series of Outlines by Retzch," called "Retzch's Fancies." The "Diary of an Ennuyée" has gone through more editions than any of her works. It is not only a delightful book of travels, but the vivid picture of an individual mind—a personal narrative, which is

always exciting and interesting. But self-consciousness, the bane of all real emotion is implied in the possibility of recording emotion; and feeling is apt "to die, if it but look upon itself." Hence, we regard those who enrich the world's experience by the disclosure of their own souls, to be themselves the sacrifice; for both joy and sorrow are blunted by their own record. Her last work, up to this period, is entitled "Companion to the most celebrated Private Galleries of Art;" in which, while she never outrages the reader by those strong prejudices of indiscriminate laudation or detraction, so common to writers who speak of the modern as well as the old masters, she continually presents us with some of the most delightful and truthful descriptions ever penned. In one respect also Mrs. Jameson has the advantage over her predecessors—she is more careful.

Miss Martineau's novel of "Deerbrook" involves a moral puzzle,—in one aspect unsatisfactory; in the other successfully solved.* "The Hour and the Man," is a story of deep interest; but fiction has done little

* Its hero outrages his own nature by marrying (from a mistaken motive of compassion) a woman whom he does not love, while he deeply loves her sister. The object of his passion is represented as unconscious of it, and indifferent to him. His choice is not between one sister and another, but between his own soul's truth to itself and its emotions—remaining unmarried—and a marriage without love. He arrives at happiness in his wedded life after a struggle. It is here that the theory of the story is unsatisfactory. The great reality of a pure passion having been crushed for the sake of a shadow,—a high poetical moral, following nature as its guide, would, we think, require a tragedy

for it. In the form of an authentic memoir of its grand subject, the life and death of "Toussaint L'Ouverture," its effect would have been more powerful. The descriptions of tropical scenery are, however, exquisite. Much finer than either of these works of fiction are the tales comprising the series called the "Playfellow," published within the last two years. These tales, constructed simply, to suit the minds for which they are intended, and founded on the emotions and actions of children, breathe a spirit of noble fortitude, endurance, energy, and self-control, which make them healthy reading for old and young. If they have a fault it is that they are rather wanting in love as an influence, resting more on the teachings of suffering. Among them all "The Crofton Boys" is our especial favourite. In all these works there is evinced a very great power of description, exaltation of sentiment, and frequently a quiet humour. Harriet Martineau is never personal nor satirical. "Life in the Sick Room" is published without a name; but that she is the authoress cannot be doubted for a moment by any one who has studied her writings, and far less by any one who has ever held companionship with herself; for it breathes of herself in

as the consummation. On the other hand, as "Deerbrook" represents humanity struggling onward in that path which its own will had chosen, and achieving its triumph therein, it is successful. Nevertheless, the subject appears to us doubtful and dangerous, as tampering with that deep passion which is destined to be the world's great purifier out of the degradation of sensuality.

every thought and word, chastened, purified, and instructed by suffering, and with eyes firmly fixed on the countenance of the Angel of Death, which is to her not terrible, but calm, in pale and solemn beauty. The holy teachings of this book are more touching in their wisdom than would be the words of one who came to us "from the dead;" for here the bourne is not passed; the words come indeed from one who has become accustomed to her "footing on the shaking plank over the deep dark river," but who is not too far removed from our sympathies, and has not yet laid aside the conditions of our common nature.

Both these fine writers have, as we have seen, advocated a re-modelling of our institutions with regard to their own sex. The one represents the intellect of the question, the other the feeling; one brings to it an acute abstract comprehension, the other all the sympathies of a woman; one reasons from observation, the other from experience; one has been roused to the cause by general benevolence, the other, probably, by personal suffering. Harriet Martineau has devoted her powers chiefly to science, moral or political. She has generally written with some fixed aim, some doctrine to illustrate, some practical object to accomplish. Mrs. Jameson, on the other hand, has pursued the study of refined criticism, and art. She is a large-hearted and clear-headed critic, and possesses a subtle insight into character.

We may expect many more works from her. To the course of Harriet Martineau we must look as to one nearly closed; but close when it may, she has done her part in this world's work, worthily. Possessing a mind endowed with the capability of great usefulness, she has nobly applied it to high purposes. She has shown the power of grasping a principle; of evolving from it all its legitimate consequences, and of so clearly arranging them as to present truth to the understanding and to the heart by its consistency and harmony. She may be said to have a logical imagination, reasoning on truth through beauty. Her genius is not creative; but her works of fiction exhibit a rare faculty of conception, and the power of combining the materials collected by her accurate observation and clear thought, so as to produce a charm and an interest. She is poetical, though not a poet. One composition, however, to which we have already referred, might, by itself, give her a claim to the title; but, perhaps, there is no fine mind which has not in its time produced its one poem. Then, as now, would she watch the course of time, and feel the evidences of an eternal progress.

"By night, like stars on high,
The hours reveal their train;
They whisper and go by;
I never watch in vain.
Moves one, move all;
Hark to the foot-fall!
On, on, for ever.

SHERIDAN KNOWLES

AND

WILLIAM MACREADY.

"Too *popular* is Tragic Poesy,
Straining his tip-toes for a farthing fee.
Painters and Poets hold your ancient right!
Write what you will, and write not what you might.
Their limits be their list—their reason, *will!*"

BISHOP HALL'S *Satires.*

Manager. But above all things action must abound;
Men come to look—they crave shows for the eye.
If much be pictured, so that the crowd may stare,
Then hast thou won the broadest path of fame,
And art accounted as a well-loved man.

Poet. Thou feel'st not how this handicraft is base;
How little it befits an artist true!
The muddling clap-traps of such dapper-wits
Is, I observe, a maxim now with you.

GOETHE. *Theatre-Prologue.*

SHERIDAN KNOWLES

AND

WILLIAM MACREADY.

THE DRAMA should be the concentrated spirit of the age. The Stage should be the mirror over which every varying emotion, of the period should pass. What is the Spirit of an Age as regards the Drama? Certainly the Theatrical Spirit is the most undramatic that can be. Stage-plays are not of necessity Dramas, and more truly dramatic elements may often be found in the novelist's works than in the theatrical writer's. The Dramatic Spirit of our Age, of this very year, is to be found more living and real in the pages of Hood, Dickens, Mrs. Gore, and Mrs. Trollope, than in the play-house pieces. These writers gather for themselves the characteristics of existence as modified by the principles and taste of the age, and the stage dramatists draw from them, or from the

large conventional storehouse of the hereditary drama their traditionary portraitures.

In this portion of our subject, must we then examine the works of the novelists and other writers of fiction, rather than the stage writers? To be strictly logical, this should be the case; but as our work is historical as well as critical, we must adhere to the popular and forsake the philosophical classification.

The visible Drama is most eminently portrayed in the works of Sheridan Knowles, and the acting of William Macready. These two gentlemen, at all events, are the visible representers of it, and ninety-nine men out of every hundred allude to and think of them when discussing Dramatic matters. This is reversing the rational state of the matter; but being so, we must endeavour to accommodate ourselves to it.

The only way in which Mr. Knowles personifies our age, is in his truly domestic feeling. The age is domestic, and so is he. Comfort—not passionate imaginings,—is the aim of every body, and he seeks to aid and gratify this love of comfort. All his dramas are domestic, and strange to say, those that should be most classic, or most chivalric, most above and beyond it, are the most imbued with this spirit. In what consists the interest and force of his popular play of "Virginius?"

The domestic feeling. The costume, the setting, the decorations are heroic. We have Roman tunics, but a modern English heart,—the scene is the Forum, but the sentiments those of the "Bedford Arms." The affection of the father for his daughter—the pride of the daughter in her father, are the main principles of the play, and the pit and galleries and even much of the boxes are only *perplexed* with the lictors and the Decemviri, and the strange garments of the actors. These are a part of the shew folks' endeavour to amuse. Is Caius Gracchus not heroic?—are there not very long speeches about Liberty and Rome? Undoubtedly: but still the whole care of Gracchus is for his family: and to the audience the interest is entirely domestic.

It is the same in "William Tell;" though Liberty and Heroism should be the prevailing subjects, the interest is entirely domestic. For the freedom of a country, for the punishment of a mean and cruel tyrant, the auditor of this play but slenderly cares,—while for the security of Tell's family, and the personal success of Tell, every one is anxious. This feeling, in proportion as our author became popular, has only more visibly developed itself; and his later productions have manifested his prevailing quality more powerfully in the pure form of woman's characteristics. Julia, -the Wife—the Countess Eppenstein, are fine impersonations of the affections; elaborated and ex-

foliated into all the ramifications of womanhood. Is this assertion of his ruling principle stated in a spirit of detraction? By no means: but only to enable us to trace the cause of Mr. Knowles' popularity, as far as it extends, and to show the inevitable connection the writer's genius must have with the Spirit of the Age. Mr. Knowles is at the head of the acted Dramatists of the age, assuredly not because he has more invention, more wit, more knowledge of human character, or more artistical skill than many other living dramatic writers, but because his genius, for domestic interests, added to his stage influence as an actor, has forced his talents into higher or fuller employment than that of any of his compeers. He has delved into the human breast, and traced the secret windings of the affections. Limited, indeed, to the emotions elicited by modern social intercourse, but still with genuine truth and varied knowledge. For this he is greatest in dialogue scenes that gradually and completely unfold a feeling. And again, this tendency of his genius induces him to delight in delineating the characteristics of woman.

He is entitled to respect inasmuch as he has risen instead of fallen with public approbation. In "Virginius," "Caius Gracchus," "Tell," we see the play-wright predominant. Mr. Knowles, when composing these, was struggling for fame, perhaps for

existence, and he was compelled to pass through the turnpikes that public taste had erected, and managers maintained. Consequently, we find all the formula of the received drama,—shows, battles, bustle, antiquated phraseology, vapid imitations of obsolete humours, and altogether a barbarous medley of the traditionary and commonplace tricks of the theatre, introduced, first to attract managers and through them to charm the multitude. Gradually, however, as he won his way from servitude to power he used his success manfully. In the "Hunchback," he emancipated himself greatly from the trammels of the playwright, and in the character of "Julia" gave full licence to his genius to develope his intuitions of female nature. The plot of this play is absurd, the construction clumsy, the attempt to delineate human character in many instances feeble — the language often grotesque; but it took hold of the public, it elicited unanimous applause, because in the woman it spoke the language of nature to nature. Herein he vindicated his high calling—herein he was the poet. Situation—sentiment — circumstance — show — processions—groupings—were abandoned, and human emotion finely expressed, won and subdued all hearts,—chastening, whilst interesting; instructing, while it moved.

As an artist in dramatic composition, Mr. Knowles must be ranked with the least skilful, particularly of

late. The comparative failure of his last three or four productions is chiefly attributable to their inefficiency of construction, though they contain more beautiful poetry in detached fragments than can be found in any of his former works.

So much space would not rightly have been given to remarks on Mr. Knowles, but that he speaks the predominating feeling of the age. Were we to estimate him by comparison, or by analysis — by what has been, what is, and what may be, he would not hold a high rank—so great, so vast are the capacities of the Drama. Placed beside Shakspere, and the powerful-minded men of Elizabeth's day, he dwindles, it is true ;"* but placed beside the Rowes, the Southerns, the Murphys — he is as a man to mouthing dwarfs. But, whatever he may be by comparison, he is truly a poet, and as such should be honoured.

But the Drama has many phases ; and being so peculiarly an imitative art, how can it be otherwise? The most simple is that which reflects the tone and temperament of the age. This kind of Drama must not now be looked for amongst what is somewhat absurdly called the "legitimate." That phrase is foolishly applied to a form—the five-act form ; and to that kind of Drama which includes philosophical ex-

* We should except the finer parts of his best dialogues, in which he does not dwindle beside the Elizabethan men, but is worthy to stand among them.—Ed.

position of human character, and philosophical and rhetorical dissertation upon it. But the most legitimate, because the genuine offspring of the age, is that Drama which catches the manners as they rise, and embodies the characteristics of the time. This, then, has forsaken the five-act form, and taken shelter at what have been named "Minor Theatres," and it will be found in the skilful little Comedies, and bright, racy Dramas of Jerrold, Planché, Bernard, Buckstone, Oxenford, Dance, Mark Lemon, Moncrieff, Coyne, Leman Rede, Lunn, Peake, Poole, and others. Few of these clever writers have made any pretensions, in writing for the stage, beyond pecuniary and fair professional motives. Mr. Jerrold, Mr. Oxenford, Mr. Planché, and several more, have various other claims in literature; but their position on the stage only is here treated. They have, each and all (though in very different quantities), lavished much wit, fancy, and invention on their productions, doomed by the theatrical destinies to an ephemeral existence. Some of their pieces have lived their thirty, fifty, and even hundred nights, and then been heard of no more. These writers have borne the brunt of much truculent and bombastic criticism — they have been miserably remunerated—and often but ill appreciated, though much applauded. Whoever for the last twenty years has spent his evenings at the Olympic, the Adelphi, the Haymarket, the Strand, the Surrey, and even the

Victoria Theatres, cannot but recall the innumerable dramas that have risen, like summer clouds, evening after evening, only to be absorbed into a night, endless in all cases, and frequently undeserved. How many sparkling sallies — how much gaiety — how many humorous characteristics — lightly and vividly shadowing forth our social existence,—and what skill in the distribution of the action and effects! Could all the laughs be collected and re-uttered in a continuous volley, the artillery of Waterloo would be a trifle to it; nor would the rain of that destructive day exceed the tears that have been shed at these shrines of the dramatic muses. Yet the authors are spoken of slightingly by the ponderous dispensers of fame; and treated by the managers, and even the delighted public, as something only a few degrees above street-minstrels. But herein is shadowed the fate of their mighty predecessors; and in the red-herring and rhenish banquet that killed Nash—in the tavern-brawling death of Marlowe—in the penury of Dekker—of Webster, who was a parish-clerk,— of Beaumont, and Fletcher, and the distresses of nearly every one of the dramatists of their age, is to be found the symbol of the conduct which originality ever suffers, in the first instance. Deaths that might have resembled Otway's, have no doubt been often within an ace of occurring among many of his fraternity. The

present race are small of stature when measured with their noble progenitors—not because the present Age is so much less imaginative and impassioned, but because the public taste has been perverted, and cannot improve of itself, and because managers, without a single exception, persist in pandering to that perversion, viz., addressing gaudy and expensive shows to the external senses. The elder dramatists were scholars and immortal poets writing to and for enquiring and earnest-minded men. The intellectual *wants* of that age were large — their speculative faculties were fully developed—the grandest questions and the highest deeds occupied men, and the theme must be high and the development fine that satisfied them. Bacon propounded the proposition of Nature and its causes — Raleigh and Sydney embodied the Chivalry—and a Faith, burning and sincere, sought to penetrate the deepest recesses of man's eternal destinies. It is not meant to be argued that, in their own day, any of the great men of former times who needed bread, were not as liable to be half-starved as they are now; nor to be intimated that any such greatness exists in our day; but simply, that original greatness, *besides* all the old difficulties and neglects, has now a trading mass of hostile criticism against it, and that there is not the same enthusiasm to be half-starved as formerly.

The poets who speak to an age must be equal to

it, or they will not be heard; if far beyond it they will not be listened to, in so far as they are beyond it. The elder dramatists having a ready access to the stage, and a cordial welcome, wrote with a full nature because their audiences felt it, and were not weak and dainty. Checked at every turn, our modern acted dramatists have for the most part sought to effect little more than pastime for the hour. The difference is at least as much in the times and circumstances as the men.

It is not to depreciate, but to estimate, that we compare. Whatever the amount of their ability, the truly dramatic, as far as it exists on the modern stage at all, will be found in these comparatively neglected writers of the minor drama. This neglect may be traced to one special cause—they are not "literary." The literary men were opposed to them, and so strongly was this felt, that one of them said to another who has subsequently become one of the most popular essayists of the day, "So, you have left *us*, and taken *to literature!*" The Drama is so elastic as to embrace the highest poetry, philosophy, eloquence, wit, knowledge and learning, as exemplified by him who was great in each and all. It can, however, exist without any of these qualities, and reaches in a graphic vista from "Punch" to Æschylus. Our modern play-wrights (as they are nick-named) have sought

only to please, and cared not to exercise more labour than was absolutely necessary for this end. Quickness—interest—invention—skill, were demanded and provided, and often wit, humour, fancy and pathos thrown into the bargain.

In Jerrold's forty dramas who does not recognize an infinity of brilliant repartee—of fine sense and feeling? What a readiness in the dialogue!—what variety of characteristics! So much, that if carefully woven into no greater number of plays than Congreve wrote, would have provided a far more lasting and deserved reputation than that licentious classic has obtained. "Doves in a Cage," the "Wedding Gown," "Nell Gwyn," the "Prisoner of War," and the remainder of the long list, how abounding are they with sparkling glances and pungent satire on the humours, follies and absurdities of existing life!

Mr. Buckstone is nearly as prolific as Thomas Heywood, and almost all his pieces have been successful, and deservedly so; that is, they have made hundreds and thousands laugh and cry, and speeded the hours of innumerable audiences. Quantity may not betoken quality, nor success merit, but still there must be, and there is, much of the latter in Buckstone. He is a translator, a hunter up of old stories, a retailer of old jokes, an adapter and stage artizan, say many. So he is; but still he does all these things

with talent—he excellently adapts rather than translates—and gives new life to an old joke by giving it congenial characteristics. His hand is hard, and his colouring coarse; but still he has a quick eye for social absurdities, knows the pulse of an audience, to the finest division; is admirable in construction, and effect, and possesses that very uncommon gift in an Englishman—a ceaseless flow of animal spirits, which is perhaps the main source of all his successes.

Mr. Bernard, in his earlier career, dealt more in the sentimental; and very delicate and high-toned were some of his dramas. They touched the chord of domestic feeling and rung a sharp and full vibration from it. "A Man of Genius on his Last Legs" proved his rich sense of the absurd, as did many subsequent productions. He too is essentially of his age.

Mr. Oxenford has mastered the art of construction, and can manufacture a piece for the stage as a cabinet-maker fashions an ingenious article. His idea of fun is great, and his fancy is governed by a highly cultivated and instructed judgment. Invention and humour are his, as is evident to every one who has seen "A Day Well Spent."*

Mr. Planché, if only for the extraordinary number of dramas he has successfully produced, would deserve

* Mr. Oxenford has also sterling claims in literature, were it only for his unrivalled translations from Calderon.—ED.

especial notice. Original dramas, translations, farces, interludes, operas, Christmas pleasantries, &c.; he has contributed upwards of one hundred pieces to the stage, and with the exception of only three "damnations" they have all been successful! Mr. Planché has a vivid notion of manners, and depicts character as exemplified and modified by them, admirably. The fine lady of intrigue—the battered debauchee of rank—the man of pleasure—he delineates well. He has a strong feeling for, and admiration of the artificial elegancies of life—considerable fancy—a ready invention in character and situation, and great skill in new adaptations; not much wit or repartee, but a genial and laughable humour, and the rare art of throwing a refining atmosphere round even the most unpromising subjects. He has the most wary, watchful, logical head in the construction of a play, and could give instructions in this respect to some of the best dramatists, very much to their advantage.

But we must pass on, and without particularizing the individual characteristics of the pens of the many "ready writers" who have set in motion the various green-rooms.

Dance—and Leman Rede—have each made a path for themselves, nor can it be doubted but they possess in themselves the ability to produce something very superior to that which circumstance and the

present condition of the stage requires at their hands ; and Moncrieff only wanted to have fallen on a better age to have been ranked with some of the dramatists of a nobler era.

But have all the play-makers and stage-feeders been named ?—Not a tenth part of them. Are all of the same ability ?—By no means. A catalogue as lengthy as that of Homer's ships might be made, though their freights would by no means be so weighty. Shades of these shadows might be found ; second, third, and fourth transmitters of a weak original ; combinations of the ferocious and the witty, and imitators and constructors so faint and poor that the art is no longer concealed, and the mechanism is apparent to all but the merest novices, or the most vapid imaginations. Surprises, rescues, and discoveries, perils, escapes, and disguises, so echoed and re-echoed that all effect is gone. Puns so obvious, allusions so dim, mistakes so absurd, disguises so thin, characteristics so exaggerated, equivokes so bald, that no reflecting mind could be entertained, or for a moment be deluded, by them. To particularize names here would be invidious. Though all who depress the age deserve as much castigation as those who by their talents raise it deserve eulogy, these are not of sufficient importance. Collectively, only, they are so. With such as we have last mentioned, the drama has sunk from the educated and the tasteful

to the uncultivated, and those of coarser pleasures,—from the refined gentleman to the intelligent trader, and from him to the small shop-keeper, the inferior class of operatives, the ignorant, and the degraded.

The acted drama of our age is at the best but of a poor kind. It has been popular because it was small, and it was small because it merely sought popularity. But the great heart of the world, although it beat faintly, has not lost its vitality; and the sympathies, capacities, and wants of the human soul will manifest themselves. Whilst the stage only sought in general to shadow forth the smaller peculiarities of an actual and every-day life domesticity, there have been men in whom all the passionate energies and imaginings of our nature would burst forth. These men belonging to literature, and not to the stage, have been rightly designated as "unacted dramatists," and the press gave to the world what the corrupted stages were too sunken in their own earthy ruins to be able to believe in, or even recognize as having any affinity with their own existence. The spirit of the drama no longer trod, but was trodden into "the boards," and therefore a set of unacted dramatists arose, and will some day be seen and heard.

It has been erroneously fancied that inflated with a literary position and high notions, they both envied, and looked down upon their acted fraternity, and thought them mere usurpers. A greater calumny

could not have been devised. On the contrary, the unacted dramatists consider those at present occupying the stage, to be its only supporters; so far from envying their position, they consider their abilities underrated, and not sufficiently remunerated; and in all their successes they sympathise and rejoice. But that in the pure element of dramatic composition they also consider themselves worthy to be "ranked with some of the dramatists of a nobler era," is undoubtedly true,—and one of them has been heard to set at nought the scoffs of his time, by claiming to rank, in the pure elements of tragedy, with the dramatists of the Greek or Elizabethan ages.* How far any of those "high and remote" claims may have grounds, it is impossible to devote space for examination; they are mentioned, however, to show at least the vitality and self-reliance of the dramatic spirit, and that, besides the known and acted men, there is a "brood" as yet beneath the earth, who may one day spring up like the dragon's teeth sown by Cadmus.

But it has been asked by some, even in our own country, who, not *seeing* a play, are by no means sure of its existence—"Who *are* those unacted dramatists?" The answer from lovers of the elder drama would be—"Shakspere, in respect of at least two-

* Our esteemed Contributor avoids naming the Author of "Cosmo de' Medici," and "Gregory VII.," for obvious reasons; but lest some others might have to bear the odium of taking their position into their own hands, the offender is hereby "given up" to justice.—ED.

thirds of his plays; and Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Ford, Webster, Marlowe,—in fact all the rest of the Elizabethan dramatists, who are absolutely unacted. Not to confuse the question, however, let us speak of the modern drama as it is:—"Who then are these unacted dramatists?" The answer must be—"Nearly all the best authors." The knowledge of some and the ignorance of others of the dramatic *art*, is not, at present, the question; the object is to show that all are treated with nearly the same exclusion; in fact, that there is manifestly the strongest tendency in the present age to be dramatic, but its chief authors have no means of learning the art. To go no further back than Byron, Southey, Shelley, Coleridge, the list includes almost every author eminent in works of imagination and invention. With those just mentioned we should class—because his genius ranks among them—the honoured name of Barry Cornwall, who having had a tragedy successfully produced upon the stage as long since as 1821, has manifestly never felt it worth while to tempt again the countless troubles and unworthy annoyances attending representation. Something similar may be said with regard to Mr. Leigh Hunt, notwithstanding that he had suddenly displayed a most undeniable genius for dramatic composition. But the list of names is far too numerous to give. Even Wordsworth and Keats,—the two

last men from whom anything in the shape of a drama could be expected, have written tragedies. Surely nothing can more directly show the breadth of the external influences of this Spirit of the Age. It has even penetrated to the heart of the aristocracy, as shown in the dramas of Lord Francis Egerton, Lord John Russell, Lord John Manners, Lord Beaumont, &c.; the "Francesca di Faenza" of the latter, containing some of the finest dramatic writing and situation of modern times.

The Drama is a root; a theatrical show is a mere blossom. One is born of its age, the other grows through it, out of the past into the future. The poet deals with eternal nature, and the eternal effects of nature. The poetaster deals with the tastes of men as formed by their circumstances, and fashioned by convention and association; the poet with the passions of men, and the qualities of things. The one is guided by mere association, the other by analogy.* The one by casual prejudices, the other by truths. The poetaster appeals to the pleasurable recollections and notions by association; the poet extends our knowledge and experience, making the soul wise, because he proceeds by analogy. There are two

* Mr. Henry Mayhew in his "What to teach, and how to teach it," was, we believe, the first author who forcibly marked out and illustrated this important distinction and theory. We also regard the treatises on the Drama by this gentleman's brother, Mr. Edward Mayhew, as highly deserving of careful study.

kinds of dramatists. He who seeks to reflect back the sentiments, feelings, prejudices, and foibles of the day; who is at once an echo and a glass;—and he who, passing by these common modes of procuring success, exemplifies the human creature in all the various phases that its intellect, temperament, passions, and desires produce.

They may to a certain degree, and perhaps must, be mingled. But it is easy to see which mode will be pursued by those whose sole aim is the applause of "a house." At the hustings, the brawling reiteration of catch-words must be more *successful* (to use the favourite and hard-ridden modern phrase), than Plato or Coleridge, would have been.

It may naturally be expected that some space should be devoted to the productions of two gentlemen who have written for the stage, and have attracted a large share of public attention by their well-merited success in other departments of literature, as well as law, politics, and various valuable public services. But for these reasons, Mr. Serjeant Talfourd, and Sir Edward Bulwer, will receive a separate and more entire attention than could here be given to their claims. It will therefore be sufficient in the present paper to say that Talfourd — the representative of the classical drama, as Sheridan Knowles is of the romantic,—did really "stand in the gap" during the periods when there were few, if any

such dramas as have since been *published;* and they jointly maintained the precarious existence of the English drama. Sir Edward Bulwer, can hardly be considered as a dramatist, having pursued this class of writing, not from any strong internal gift and predominating impulse, but rather as a man of first-rate talent and ingenuity, who could produce any kind of literary article that might be in request, and having "all appliances and means to boot," could not very easily (though he has managed that, too, occasionally), do other than succeed. This justly admired, and far more dramatic novelist, was apparently drawn to the stage by the ambition and excitement of a new and difficult pursuit, and every facility for learning the art, and every theatrical assistance being sedulously afforded him, his versatile ability and great industry were profitably rewarded. Above all things, however, his exertions for the freedom of the stage, long since, entitle him to the gratitude and respect of dramatists and actors.

Of the histrionic Art, at the head of which, in this country, Mr. Macready has stood of late years, by legitimate succession no less than by superior attainments and energies, it will not be requisite to say much, nor of its professors, because the nature of their position renders their claims so well known to the public. But the Art and its professors become of additional importance when it is considered that they

excite the efforts—and to no purpose,—of nearly all the most energetic and creative intellects in our literature.

While the biography and stage recollections of the most experienced mountebank of the time,* whose "experience" has been characterized by every degree of well-merited failure, could only produce, at best, a long account of trading speculations, and mechanical details, conducted with all the arrogance of a grossly self-satisfied ignorance,—it is impossible to conceive of any biographical and professional recollections which would involve so large an amount of melancholy interest, to literary men more especially, as those of Mr. Macready.

Nothing like sufficient space could here be given for such recollections as Mr. Macready's professional career must embody, even if we possessed the materials. But how many phases of them present themselves to the mind! They must tell of early studies and difficulties, of efforts and disappointments, of renewed energies and labours, while vague aspirations and palpable ambitions broke through the fogs and mists of circumstance, as did the dangerous vision of a crown upon the yet uncertain mind of Macbeth. They must tell of slow acquirements, slow advances, chagrins, mortifications, exasperations, and redoubled

* The recent treatment of Mr. Robert Bell, an author who is moreover a truthful historian, an elegant biographer, a conscientious critic, and a man universally respected and esteemed, is a curious instance of the power of "position" in this country. The redress he finally obtained was certainly no sort of recompense.

efforts, with some successes, though so disproportionate to the efforts, the hopes, and, in many cases, to the just deserts. Gradually they would display successes, and popular successes, and the rank of "principal" in them, but not in the highest walk. Yet here would commence more completely the consciousness of that undue position over the intellectual men of a country, which every very successful actor or actress attains, in respect of one of the highest departments of literature. His recollections would now tell of dissatisfactions of position, and cast of characters, and of nobler aims at greater excellence; of his attainment of the first class of characters, and his hard-earned successes in them, notwithstanding the all-but eclipsing and overwhelming genius, energy, and unequalled popularity of Kean;—of tormenting struggles of rivalry, and to maintain his position; of his gradual security, and, by degrees, of his fortitude, temperance, and unconquerable perseverance, bringing him his reward as sole possessor of the tragic throne, from which, step by step, with staggering power, his meteoric sword fading from his hand—his inspiration now bordering upon delirium—the intemperate, heart-desolate wreck of Edmund Kean, with hands still grappling the shape-thronged air, reeled away half unconsciously into the darkness.

Mr. Macready was now admissibly the first living tragedian; and if the anxiety of authors to obtain

his assistance in the production of their pieces upon the stage had previously been great, it was now immensely increased; and their overtures, and flatteries, and dedications, were enough to have turned the head of most men into that hallucinatory condition of mind, in which most potentates necessarily exist. Yet such is the contradictory nature of circumstances, and of theatrical circumstances above nearly all others, and such the predominating power of external *position* in this country, above every kind of internal individual capacity, that at this same time Mr. Macready's position being that of an actor under that of a manager, it signified nothing that he was immeasurably superior, in himself and in every attainment,—he was nevertheless subject to the grossest ill-treatment and insult from one of the lowest. How that unbearable condition of things terminated, is well known; and how universally did Mr. Macready carry with him the sympathy and approval of all educated men, and of all true lovers of the Drama, of common justice, and common decency, must be equally fresh in the memory of the public. There was no other alternative, and Macready became a Manager.

It is not requisite to dwell upon this gentleman's great successes in what he sought to effect, as matter of taste in the "getting up" of dramas; nor upon his repeated failure, as matter of pecuniary

speculation. His influence upon the national intellect as a manager, must, however, come under discussion, together with a view of managerial influence, generally, whether in this, or any other country. Nor can we do better than quote a few remarks on the rise of the drama in Spain,—for though they are applied to the neglect experienced by Cervantes, the pith of the whole question will be seen to be one and the same.

"If the only thing requisite in order to originate, to revive, to reform, or to re-create the drama of a civilized country, was dramatic genius; if to possess the faculty and execute the work, as matter of literary composition, were all that was needed to produce the effect or commence its development,—then perhaps might the name of Cervantes have stood parallel in Spain with the highest names of our dramatists of the age of Elizabeth. But between original dramatic genius, and its desired attempts, there come three powerful intermediates, any one of which may prevent the very chance of fair trial, or any trial at all,—these are the public tastes of the day, influence of capital (or the want of it), and the individual capacities and characters—in fact the private taste of managers of theatres. The public taste may be good or vicious, its reception of new things is always a doubtful matter; capital is rarely, if ever, embarked upon a new thing of *ideal* pretensions; and to say that a particular novelty of any kind would be to the interest of a manager to produce, might be true, or untrue,—that is not the question, but what he thinks, and chooses to do; and whether he be very wise or very ignorant, he has hitherto been 'the law,' as to what genius or talent should make its appeal to the public through the medium of the stage."*

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* Essay on "The Dramatic Mind of Europe," by R. H. Horne.

Apart from all other considerations, that a public professing to understand, and certainly having so universal an admiration of Shakspere, should not have sufficiently patronized a manager who displayed so much anxiety to produce his plays under the name of "revivals," with a prodigality of scenic illustration and supernumerary appointments, all excellent, expensive, appropriate, and skilfully applied — but that, on the contrary, the public should in very few instances be found sufficiently numerous (as the paying portion of the audience) to half-fill the theatre after the excitement of the first three or four nights, so that eventually the accomplished and indefatigable manager is obliged to go to America to recover his health and retrieve his damaged fortunes, — would appear to be one of the most inexplicable problems of modern times, if not one of its deepest disgraces. Still, there must be some solution to this? Perhaps the public may not, after all, be so perverse as appears? The truth is so important to all the interests of dramatic literature and the stage, that, if it can be discovered, some hope of a remedy and a new and prosperous course might perhaps be descried. A few opinions and suggestions shall therefore be offered in these concluding pages.

Whatever troubles, pertinacities, and wearisome applications Mr. Macready may have experienced from the authors of dramas previous to his becoming

a manager, it cannot be doubted but that they must have multiplied prodigiously afterwards. The most improbable plots, or the most inextricable non-constructions, with characters at once monstrous and imbecile, outrageous and inconsequential, are forwarded to managers by hundreds every season, from the pens of educated, half educated, and totally uneducated men,—without the ability to put two acts, or perhaps two scenes, together, with consecutive action and direct purpose; without an idea of consistency in any one character; without the least prevision of effects upon an audience; with a total disregard of what is convenient or impossible in the nature and sequence of scenery; yet each one believing that *his* play is, of all others, the most eligible to the manager, and—if the notion of a "cast" occurs at all—the most eligible for the talents of the given company. The fate of all these pieces may be anticipated. But there is another class of men, who at intervals of from one to three years, transmit dramatic productions to managers. These authors are not numerous; some of them are known in the literary world, some not. They are, for the most part, solitary students of nature an the passions, of philosophy, of literature, and of art; they have worked secretly for years, and the midnight lamp and the shadow on the wall have been sole witnesses of their toils, their enthusiasms, and their aspiring dreams.

Straitened in means, no doubt, they usually are, so that at last the time which they have given to preparing themselves to be worthy of some honour, needs a little remuneration. And these men are treated precisely with the same rejection and neglect as those previously described. So certainly as they have suffered themselves to be deluded by the compliments and exhortations to publish their tragedies or plays, and to renew their efforts in the same class of composition, so certainly have they been injured in the worst way; their time, their energies, and their health wasted, and in cases where the impulse was too strong to be checked, and they have had no private resources, they have been ruined. That the dramas they forwarded to managements were unskilful in some respects, dangerous in others, and wanting practical assistance in many, cannot admit of a doubt; but it is questionable if they were more unskilful, dangerous, or wanting, than those accepted and acted productions which, *with* every assistance from managers and actors, have proved ruinous to all parties.

Abundant examples might be adduced to prove this. Perhaps the two most striking would be those of "Martinuzzi" and "Plighted Troth"—the first produced under the auspices of unexperienced amateurs and conflicting practical opinions; the other produced by a most experienced management, and

all governed by one head. It may be said that Mr. Macready did not incur a loss exceeding five or six hundred pounds by the disastrous failure of "Plighted Troth," whereas the chivalrous experiment of Mr. Stephens cost him perhaps, in all, more than double that sum. Yet that was caused by his own will,—his resolve not to be conquered, but to play a five-act tragedy in defiance of an absurd law, and of the friends of the old managerial system; and this he did during upwards of twenty nights. "Plighted Troth," be it admitted, contained, as well as "Martinuzzi," several scenes of true dramatic genius; it was the bad judgment of all parties that made them both look so preposterous.

But if the unacted Drama be held in no regard by theatrical people, it is not much more esteemed by the majority of the public press. The slightest acted piece often has a long notice; whereas, of an unacted tragedy or comedy anything, or nothing, may be said,—and any thing, it is fancied, with impunity.

"But the Unacted, and consequently the unaided Drama, has at length made some progress; under every disadvantage, with every thing in its disfavour, it has made its way against its well-provided opponent. The Acted Drama, with all the aid of numerous actors, beautiful paintings, charming music—with all the dazzling fascinations that belong to public shows—with fashion, custom, and hereditary predilection in its favour,—has dwindled and degenerated, until the voice of criticism, of the Dramatists themselves, and of the intellectual part of the public, have declared it inferior in mental power to the Unacted;—have declared that, with all the facilities that practice

can give, with all the means that experience and knowledge can afford, it is more essentially deficient in *the true elements* of dramatic power, than the Unacted. The Unacted Drama may have awkwardnesses, incongruities, and even absurdities, from its not having the advantages of experience and practical exercise. But that it is great in conception, powerful in expression, strong in originality, and vigorous from its freshness, is allowed. It has again dared to step within the terrific circle of the passions, and to show in appalling strife those never-dying elements of humanity."*

What with the claims of the able and the incompetent, the reasonable and the unreasonable, the men of genius and talent with a definite aim, and the men of self-delusion and a puzzled will,—the logical heads and the half insane, the sound advice of one friend, the flattering advice of another, and the retreating opinion of all, as the manager himself began to come to a decision—Mr. Macready must have had a most feverish seat of power, and a most troublesome and thankless reign. The bad success here which caused him to make a trip to America, has very possibly been the saving of his life and health, and may be regarded as a gratulatory result by everybody, since everybody must look forward with interest to his career, which will probably be renewed in this country by fresh "revivals" of Shakspere in one of the smaller theatres. So placed, with a less lavish expenditure in gorgeous redundancies and real uphol-

* Lecture on the "Relative Value of the Acted and the Unacted Drama," by F. G. Tomlins, Secretary to the Shakspere Society, &c.

stery, and wisely confining himself to the old established stock pieces, he would most probably be very successful; and that he would be most deservedly so, there can hardly exist a doubt. But he should carefully avoid all new pieces, and all pretence of encouraging living dramatists; first, because, instructed by long experience, he must have found that it is his destiny to select mediocrity or failure; and secondly, because he will thus cease to excite the efforts and occupy the time of men of intellect, to no purpose.

Mr. Macready's merits as an actor are far greater than his defects; let us therefore contemplate the former, chiefly. He is the first artist on the stage. On all those innumerable points of art connected with the stage, which he has studied from his youth, there is no one who possesses more knowledge or skill in their application; and no one possesses both in an equal degree. He is rarely "at home" in anything new, either of principle or practice, without long study, if then. His conception is slow, and by degrees; nor does it ever attain beyond a certain point. That point is the extremity of all that his study and practice can discover and embody; and it is very much. He has no revelations of genius, no inspirations except those which are unconsciously "given off" at times from great physical energies. If he had any such revelations, he would adopt them doubtfully, and partially, and so defeat their essential

meaning. But when he does embrace the whole of a character (such as William Tell, Coriolanus, Iago, Cardinal Wolsey, King John,) he leaves little undone, and all the rest to admire, in the highest degree. He dresses to perfection. He is the only man on the stage who seems to have a fine eye for true harmony of colour. Sometimes he has allowed splendid dresses to be destroyed by an equally splendid back-ground of similar colour, but never when he himself is in front of it. If he wore but a blanket, he would have a back-ground that should make that blanket the most gracious object the eye could rest upon—perhaps the focus of all attraction. He reads poetry very badly, as to rhythm—broken up—without melody—harsh—unmusical—shattered prose; and yet he speaks with exquisite distinctness, and very impressively, because he is thoroughly in earnest. There is great finish in all he does—a definite aim, clearly worked out—and those who find little to admire in his acting, the fault is in them.

As a manager he has unexampled merits in his attempt to separate the theatres from their long-established union with bare-faced licentiousness. It is to his great and lasting honour that he is the first manager who seems ever to have felt that Art has nothing in common with "the town." Great merit is also due to him for his indefatigable industry and attention to all the business of the theatre One

instance of his thoughtful care, though to the outside of the walls, should be noticed: he successfully defeated *the brutality which characterizes an English audience in entering the pit on crowded nights;* and the public, especially the female portion, should be grateful for so needful an attention. His exertions to improve the stage arrangements and appointments, are well known; they extended from broad effects down to the minutest details,—perhaps the former were sometimes injured by the latter. He made the supernumeraries *act*—a mortal labour. He not only multiplied the brood of these "turkeys," but he crammed them, and made men and women of them. It has been currently reported — probably on no better grounds than because he does not sing the drinking song of Iago—that Mr. Macready does not understand, or care for music. This can hardly be true: he has introduced music amidst the Shaksperean dialogue, and at "times and seasons" in a far more poetical way than any other manager. He has applied fine scenery and dioramic effects to Shak spere more appropriately to the sense of the words, than were ever done before; but as to the effect upon the action (excepting in the Chronicle plays where the want of action might justify extraneous aid,) and as to the effect upon the poetry, in all cases, there can be no doubt that both are injured by the predominating, and sometimes overwhelming effect upon

the external senses—*not* intended by the poet. As a manager of business, and in all agreements and pecuniary dealings, Mr. Macready has always been liberal, generous, thoroughly to be relied upon, and of unimpeachable integrity.

But the merits of an individual, as an actor or manager, or both, however great and meritorious, must necessarily be a small matter in themselves compared with their influence and effect upon one of the highest departments of the literature of a great nation. This, on the whole, in Mr. Macready's case, may be pronounced as good—an aggregate advantage, though bad in its individual instances. Good, inasmuch as it has largely assisted in stirring up the dramatic Spirit of the country; bad, inasmuch as, with some three or four exceptions, it has led to nothing but labour in vain. He has advised or exhorted nearly every author who sent him a drama of any pretensions, to publish it—and write another,—write another by all means—that he *could* do the thing if he would,—why did he not? &c. Mr. Macready, throughout his whole career, has produced on the stage no great or standard work of dramatic genius; or, if "Ion" and "Virginius" be regarded as exceptions, who will name a third?—and he has wasted the time of more men of genius and talent than any other individual on record.

Mr. Macready shares a part of the latter accusation with high authorities for precedent. Even Garrick did

not produce on the stage any new stock tragedy of the first class; nor did the Kemble family, nor did Edmund Kean. These facts seem to lead to the conclusion that managers and actors, when unassisted by established reputations, have no taste for anything beyond second and third-rate plays. It is in vain to say they could find no better than they produced. Too truly they could not. No one finds that which he has no soul to search for, or no eye to perceive. The great discoveries in the physical world by men of science were not their inventions; the things were there before they searched. They discovered the things they sought, because they knew them when they saw them; and the powers of nature are not limited to any particular age. The "mighty dead" are not mighty *because* they are dead—though it would seem that so many people think so. They were once alive, and laughed at.

Mr. Macready's character (we deal only with such elements of it as are directly or indirectly of public influence,) is made up of stronger opposites than is usual, however common those antagonisms are in forcible characters. He has great energies of action, and a morbid will. He has a limited imagination, with a large ambition. His imagination is slow and dull of vision, but quick and sensitive to feel. It, therefore, continually misleads him beyond retreat. For this reason, his hasty judgments are always wrong, and his slow judgments futile from exhausted

impulses. In these respects he has been much assisted by Mr. Serle. It is evidently the opinion of this gentleman that a cold dispassionate judgment is the only popular test of excited imaginations.* His advice, therefore, is always judicious, and ineffectual. But it is quite a mistake to suppose that Mr. Macready is misled by the advice of friends. We are aware that Mr. Forster and Mr. Serle have been commonly accused of this; but we think very unjustly. Mr. Macready takes no advice but that which backs his own opinion. His constant errors in judgment show that they proceed from the same man. His spirit is a hot-headed steed, capable of leaping great conclusions; but he wants faith in those things, and in himself, which would enable him to succeed greatly; and when he does leap, he makes up for a long arrear of doubts by wilfulness, and "falls on the other side." He has genial feelings, but a morbid fancy which troubles them. It pains him to laugh. His temperament is impetuous, his hopes dreary, his purposes high-minded, his opinions conflicting, and "his luck against him," with his own assistance. He boldly incurred the odium of allowing Anti-Corn-law meetings in Covent Garden, besides giving an arm-sweeping slash at recent taxations in a fare-

* But what kind of judgment was exercised in selecting the Prize Comedy for the Haymarket theatre out of the heap that were submitted, is easy to determine. It was the judgment of "experience"—that is, in theatrical matters, an experience in judging wrong; an experience built up with failures.

well address; and he made a speech to the poor Duke of Cambridge, on receiving a "testimonial," at which all his best friends blushed, and he himself, before the farce was concluded, which had cost so much pains to get up, wished a large trap-door would unbolt itself beneath his feet. As a patron of modern dramatic literature, he has been totally mistaken by others, and the less he ever attempts of this kind in future, the better for all parties. As a supporter of the Shaksperean drama, and all the fine old "stock pieces," he has not been encouraged according to his deserts; and, with all his faults, the want of sufficient patronage in his own country, is discreditable to the age.

Few men ever had the sympathies of the public more completely in their power than Sheridan Knowles. Scarcely any imprudence or deficiency that he could be guilty of, in a new play, would cause the audience to damn it, though they might not go again to see it. With Macready the case is different. He always has enemies in the "house," and a large party, or parties, against him out of the "house." Some for one thing, some for another, abstract or personal, private or public. Strong and unfailing friends he also has, and they form a party, though comparatively a small one, and rapidly decreasing. Like all very anxious men, Mr. Macready, besides his bad judgment, is unlucky; and Mr. Knowles, like all careless men, is usually in good luck, notwith-

standing his equal deficiency in judgment. The one "darkens averse" at all critical strictures, the other calls every critic he meets "my dear boy." Mr. Macready has had, however, to endure many ill-natured and personal remarks and insinuations from various parties—some who were, and others who thought they were aggrieved by him; and on the other hand, he has had the advantage of more assistance, systematic and instant to his need, from the public press, than almost any other individual of his day. If those who have publicly uttered anonymous complaints against him were known, with all their affairs in relation to him, there would be a better means of judging the case among all parties; and, on the other hand, if his public applauders and supporters were known, with all their affairs in relation to him, there would be a better means of judging among all parties. As it is, all the parties must "fret it out," till, sooner or later, a change comes over the whole scene—some grand general explosion takes place—the atmosphere clears, and a fair, open field for dramatists may then give them the means of proving their existence.

So great are the difficulties attending five-act pieces, either tragedies, comedies, or plays, that there is no instance of a successful author in them, throughout our literature of the present day. No, there is not one. Shall we mention Mr. Sheridan Knowles,

who has written three or four times as many five-act pieces as any other author, all of which have been acted? What is his success? One tragedy, scarcely ever played now; and two comedies. His last *four* dramas have been dead failures, notwithstanding their fine detached scenes, dialogues, and genuine poetry. Shall we name Sir Edward Bulwer? With all the professional friendship and assistance he has had from Mr. Macready and others, and notwithstanding his great ingenuity, and tact, and versatile skill, his dramatic list presents marked failures, with two exceptions, only one of which is now acted. Mr. Serjeant Talfourd's success rests upon one tragedy, seldom acted. As for the many great "discoveries" of Mr. Macready, they have vanished for ever. We allude to such equivocal tragedies as "Mary Stewart," "Plighted Troth," the much-puffed "Gisippus!" &c. &c. There has never been in our own times one successful acted dramatist of the higher class. Yet some of these writers (as well as others less known, or not known at all) are probably able to achieve many successes, could they have practically mastered their art. To do this there is no opportunity. The difficulties of the art are not greater than the difficulty of obtaining any sufficient means of study and experiment. The man who has succeeded most profitably, is the one who has had most of these means and "appliances."

There are no doubt a dozen good collateral causes

for the decline of the acted drama; but those at the root of the matter are simply these,—that the actors, who never did, and never can, originate or contribute to, a Dramatic Literature, have got the exclusive power of the stage;—that authors of genius have no free access to the stage for the production of pieces that originate in their *own* strongest impulses;—and that nearly all critical literature is arrayed against them by reason of the total disbelief in their practicable existence, or the possible composition of actable dramas which are not *seen*. We need seek no more causes than these. There is a body without a soul; and the body has got the visible position,—and rots.

The Drama (meaning its *literature*,) like the Age, has been at the lowest, and both are manifestly rising to a purer taste. Whether the circumstances of modern society and civilization are eventful enough to give new incidents to the Drama, may be doubted. If not, it must and will, in future, take a more imaginative and philosophical tone.

A visible Drama more nearly allied to the universal genius of the age must arise now that physical restraints are removed by the late legislation. The new order of dramatists, both acted and unacted, only await the man, come when he may, who, having the material means in his power, shall mould a form congenial to the present spirit of the age; and this once done, the abundant existing dramatic genius will

gather round it, and the Drama again become popular. It will of course be understood, that no removal of legal restrictions, nor any other outward circumstances can bring about a new dramatic period, unless dramatists have a ready access to theatres, and the services of the best actors. Without these, any possible number of the most genuine dramatists would not be of the least avail. They would be like disembodied souls; or like a waggon load of gold on the wrong side of a turnpike, where gold was not recognized. But with these necessary aids, a Drama will again be created. Theories that have long oppressed it, circumstances that have stunted and destroyed it, are rapidly passing away. The hope that external circumstances could re-ignite it, must now be for ever abandoned. Actor and actress, manager and mountebank, bandmaster and speculator, one after another, fail to do so; and the hope of their being ever able to effect a revival of the Drama, or a dramatic success of any kind,—the most pertinacious of those fallacies clung to by those who call themselves "the practical men,"—is now utterly extinguished. The utmost that Garrick effected—perhaps the most generally accomplished and versatile actor that ever lived—was merely to make the theatre fashionable, and "a rage." If it be true that he also improved or even created a better taste, he did nothing to produce or aid the creation of *the thing tasted.* It was there before him. The same

may be said of the Kembles; and of Edmund Kean. Much more has been aimed at by Mr. Macready, but not with much better success. Shakspere improved the Drama of his time, and created fresh dramas. An actor can only improve or injure taste. Mr. Macready has done both—improved taste in poetical scenery, and the "getting up," and injured it in almost confirming the taste for expensive upholstery and display. The imagination of creative dramatists can alone call forth any new spirit and form of Drama. The most profuse and admirable external aids can only foster mediocrity, and are so far detrimental because they dazzle and mislead the public judgment till it cannot distinguish the essential from the extraneous.

That the good management of a theatre requires the power to be vested in one man, is no doubt true; and perhaps—when we look at the discordant and conflicting talents, vanities, and interests, all in vigorous motion—his power should be almost despotic. But how far it is good for such management to be vested in a principal actor, in full possession of his acting faculties, is another question. Instead of enlarging the sphere of the drama, he is sure to narrow it to his own exclusive standard. Instead of rendering it universal, he will make it particular. Instead of a reflexion of humanity, it will become the pampered image of an individual. "I cannot *see myself* in this part," is a fa-

vourite expression of Mr. Farren's when he does not like a new play; and may be taken as a general characteristic of all the "stars." The stars, however, are disappearing, and with them the long suite of their retainers, the scenery-mongers, decorators, restorers, tailors, antiquarians, upholsterers, who have had their day. Capitalists have backed them with unbounded wealth; experience has lent them all her aid; trickery all her cunning; puffery all her placards, bills, paragraphs, and the getting up of "stories;" the press all its hundred tongues, telling of their nightly doings—besides the special tongues in cases where a public organ has been a private engine — and what has been the result? Bankruptcies, failures, dispersions, flights, half-salaries, no salaries, farewell dinners, debts, prisons,—and fresh candidates for the fatal seat. The fresh candidate, who in most cases is a fine old hand at a failure, usually finds a fresh capitalist to back him. "He is a man of *such* practical experience!" says the capitalist. Mooncalf! of *what* is his experience? Are not the practical *results* of all his efforts precisely of a kind to make every capitalist in his rational senses, start back from his disastrous "experience?" But there is also another peculiarity attached to a managerial lease-holder. He pays people if he can; if he cannot, he laughs in their faces. Anybody else would be arrested, or knocked down, or something. He stands in a sporting attitude; and

nothing happens to him! Every now and then, when a dashing speculating sort of "man about town" finds himself totally without money, and does not know what in the world to do next, he says to himself,—"Damme! I'll take a theatre!" Very likely he will find backers with money as soon as he has taken it; in any case, the proprietors are all too happy to let him the house. He invariably fails. Some are paid, many not. Who cares? That dashing speculator is not a scamp, "bless your heart!"—but an excellent good fellow. He has such enterprise in him!—such experience! Why, the impudent rogue absolutely risked nothing—he had nothing to risk. Oh, but he has such enterprise! And thus with two unexamined catch-words — enterprise and experience — the proprietors of theatres, and the poor mooncalf capitalist, delude and injure themselves and the public.

How totally inapplicable to Mr. Macready must be any of the preceding remarks, with reference to pecuniary dealings, need not be repeated; it is the more to be regretted that the system he pursued of profuse expenditure upon extrinsic adornments, was of a kind which never can prove successful, and which, for his sake, as well as that of the poetry of the Drama, we most earnestly trust he will never repeat.

During periods when the Drama and the stage have been almost at the last ebb, it should be recollected that Sheridan Knowles and Mr. Macready

have continually exerted themselves to open new springs, or recal the retiring waters. If in vain, their indefatigable energies are at least worthy of admiration. Both have now been before the public these twenty-five or thirty years, and have well earned the estimation they have obtained. Mr. Knowles commenced his career as an actor, but has some time since abandoned it. He is still in vigorous life, and full of excellent spirits — poetical, convivial, and Hibernian. In private he is a prodigious favourite with all who know him; frank, burly, smiling, offhand, voluble, and saying whatever comes uppermost; with a large heart beating under a great broad and deep chest, not easily accessible to care or trouble, but constitutionally jovial and happy. Mr. Macready in private is good-natured, easy, unaffected, without the least attempt at display, extremely gentleman-like, habitually grave, and constitutionally saturnine. His smile is melancholy, and his expression is occasionally of great kindness. He speaks little; with frequent hesitation, but well: with good sense, and enlarged and benevolent sympathies, moral and political. His views of art are confused between the real and ideal. Mr. Knowles occasionally delivers Lectures on the Drama, which are conspicuous for no philosophy or art, and an abundance of good humour and the warmest admiration of his favourite authors.

MISS E. B. BARRETT

AND

MRS. NORTON.

"Flower of the Soul! emblem of sentient Thoughts,
With prayer on prayer to chorded harps ascending,
Till at the clouded Portals, humbly bending,
They, like the holy martyrs' pale cohórts,
Wait solemnly—while sounds of dew descending
Their presence recognize, approve, and bless;—
Flower! shedding fragrance from a dark recess,
Thy roots lie passive on this mortal soil;
Thy beauty blooms on high—serene beyond our coil!"

"As one who drinks from a charmed cup
Of foaming and sparkling and murmuring wine,
Which a mighty Enchantress, filling up,
Invites to love with her lips divine."

SHELLEY.

"Thy Mind shines through thee like a radiant sun,
Although thy body be a beauteous cloud."

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

MISS E. B. BARRETT

AND

MRS. NORTON.

It is anything but handsome towards those who were criticised, or fair towards the adventurous critic, to regard, as some have done, the article on "Modern English Poetesses," which appeared a few years ago in the "Quarterly Review," as a tribute merely of admiration. It was a tribute of justice; and hardly that, because nine ladies were reviewed, of very different kind and degree of merit, all in the same article. Eight were allowed to wear their laurels; the ninth fell a victim. It may safely be declared that the poetical genius, the impassioned fervour, the knowledge of genuine nature and of society, of books, of languages, of all that is implied by the term of accomplishment, and "though last, not least," the highly cultivated talent in the poetic art, displayed by several of these poetesses, are such as to entitle them to a higher position than many of the "received" poets of past centuries.

The list we have named comprises, Mrs. Norton; Miss E. B. Barrett; Maria del Occidente; Lady Northampton (author of "Irene"); Caroline Southey; Miss Lowe; the Author of "IX Poems;" Sara Coleridge; and one other, a lady of rank, whom it was a pity to introduce. The reviewer proposed to make a wreath of them after the manner of Meleager, and appropriately commenced with Mrs. Norton as "the *Rose*, or, if she like it, *Love-lies-a-bleeding*;" and Miss Barrett as "*Greek Valerian*, or *Ladder to Heaven*, or, if she pleases, *Wild Angelica*." The former lady is well known, personally, to a large and admiring circle, and is also extensively known to the reading public by her works. The latter lady, or "fair shade"—whichever she may be—is not known personally, to anybody, we had almost said; but her poetry is known to a highly intellectual class, and she "lives" in constant correspondence with many of the most eminent persons of the time. When, however, we consider the many strange and ingenious conjectures that are made in after years, concerning authors who appeared but little among their contemporaries, or of whose biography little is actually known, we should not be in the least surprised, could we lift up our ear out of our grave a century hence, to hear some learned Thebans expressing shrewd doubts as to whether such an individual as Miss E. B. Barrett had ever

really existed. Letters and notes, and exquisite English lyrics, and perhaps a few elegant Latin verses, and spirited translations from Æschylus, might all be discovered under that name; but this would not prove that such a lady had ever dwelt among us. Certain admirable and erudite prose articles on the "Greek Christian Poets," might likewise be ascertained by the exhumation of sundry private letters and documents, touching periodical literature, to have been from the hand of that same "Valerian;" but neither the poetry, nor the prose, nor the delightfully gossipping notes to fair friends, nor the frank correspondence with scholars, such as Lady Jane Grey might have written to Roger Ascham — no, not even if the great-grandson of some learned Jewish doctor could show a note in Hebrew (quite a likely thing really to be extant) with the same signature, darkly translated by four letters,—nay, though he should display as a relic treasured in his family, the very pen, with its oblique Hebraic nib, that wrote it—not any one, nor all of those things could be sufficient to demonstrate the fact, that such a lady had really adorned the present century.

In such *chiaroscuro*, therefore, as circumstances permit, we will endeavour to offer sufficient grounds for our readers' belief, to the end that posterity may at least have the best authorities and precedents we

can furnish. Confined entirely to her own apartment, and almost hermetically sealed, in consequence of some extremely delicate state of health, the poetess of whom we write is scarcely seen by any but her own family. But though thus separated from the world, and all its experiences, Miss Barrett has yet found means by extraordinary inherent energies to develope her inward nature; to give vent to the soul in a successful struggle with its destiny while on earth; and to attain and master more knowledge and accomplishments than are usually within the power of those of either sex who possess every adventitious opportunity, as well as health and industry. Five years of this imprisonment she has now endured, not with vain repinings, though deeply conscious of the loss of external nature's beauty; but with resignation, with patience, with cheerfulness, and generous sympathies towards the world without; — with indefatigable "work" by thought, by book, by the pen, and with devout faith, and adoration, and a high and hopeful waiting for the time when this mortal frame "putteth on immortality."

The period when a strong prejudice existed against learned ladies and "blues" has gone by, some time since; yet in case any elderly objections may still exist on this score, or that some even of the most liberal-minded readers may entertain a degree of doubt as to whether a certain austere exclusiveness

and ungenial pedantry might infuse a slight tinge into the character of ladies possessing Miss Barrett's attainments, a few words may be added to prevent erroneous impressions on this score. Probably no living individual has a more extensive and diffuse acquaintance with literature — that of the present day inclusive — than Miss Barrett. Although she has read Plato, in the original, from beginning to end, and the Hebrew Bible from Genesis to Malachi (nor suffered her course to be stopped by the Chaldean), yet there is probably not a single good romance of the most romantic kind in whose marvellous and impossible scenes she has not delighted, over the fortunes of whose immaculate or incredible heroes and heroines she has not wept; nor a clever novel or fanciful sketch of our own day, over the brightest pages of which she has not smiled inwardly, or laughed outright, just as their authors themselves would have desired. All of this, our readers may be assured that we believe to be as strictly authentic as the very existence of the lady in question, although, as we have already confessed, we have no absolute knowledge of this fact. But lest the reader should exclaim, "Then, *after all*, there really may be no such person!" we should bear witness to having been shown a letter of Miss Mitford's to a friend, from which it was plainly to be inferred that she had actually seen and conversed with her. The date has unfortunately escaped us.

We cannot admit that any picture, engraving, or other portrait of Mrs. Norton with which the public has been favoured does full justice to the original; nevertheless they may be considered as likenesses, to a certain extent, and by reason of these, and her popular position as an authoress, any introductory remarks on the present occasion would be needless.

There are few poems which would be more acceptable to the lovers of poetry that embodies sweet domestic tenderness, and rural description, than Mrs. Norton's "Dream," from which we make the following extract;—

"Faint and sweet
Thy light falls round the peasant's homeward feet,
Who, slow returning from his task of toil,
Sees the low sunset gild the cultured soil,
And, tho' such radiance round him brightly glows,
Marks the small spark his cottage window throws.
Still as his heart forestals his weary pace,
Fondly he dreams of each familiar face,
Recalls the treasures of his narrow life,
His rosy children and his sunburnt wife,
To whom *his* coming is the chief event
Of simple days in cheerful labour spent."

The above is characteristic of a style in which Mrs. Norton excels, and it is a popular error to regard her solely as the poetess of impassioned personalities, great as she undoubtedly has shown herself in such delineations. It must, however, be admitted that her chief strength is in the latter. There has seldom

been more painful heart-language conveyed by a few lines than,—

"By the sigh, *whose different tone*
Hath no echo of thine own;
By the hand's cold clasp, which still
Held as not of its free will,
Shrinks, as it for freedom yearn'd;—
* * * * *
When thy tongue (ah! woe is me!)
Whispers love-vows tenderly,
Mine is shaping, *all unheard,*
Fragments of some withering word,
Which, by its complete farewell,
Shall divide us like a spell!"

The next extract is from Miss Barrett's "Seraphim," where Ador, a seraph, exhorts Zerah not to linger nor look through the closed gate of heaven, after the Voice had said "Go!"

"Thou—wherefore dost thou wait?
Oh! gaze not backward, brother mine;
The deep love in thy mystic eyne
Deepening inward, till is made
A copy of the earth-love shade—
Oh! gaze not through the gate!
God filleth heaven with God's own solitude
Till all its pavements glow!
His Godhead being no more subdued
By itself, to glories low
Which seraphs can sustain,
What if thou in gazing so,
Should behold but only one

Attribute, the veil undone—
And that the one to which we press
Nearest, for its gentleness—
Ay! His love!
How the deep ecstatic pain
Thy being's strength would capture!
Without a language for the rapture,
Without a music strong to come,
And set th' adoring free;
For ever, ever, wouldst thou be
Amid the general chorus dumb,—
God-stricken, in seraphic agony!
Or, brother, what if on thine eyes
In vision bare should rise
The LIFE-FOUNT whence his hand did gather
With solitary force
Our immortalities!—
Straightway how thine own would wither,
Falter like a human breath,—
And *shrink into a point like death,*
By gazing on its SOURCE!

We cannot do better, we think, than attempt to display the different characteristics of the genius of the two highly-gifted women who form the subject of the present paper, by placing them in such harmonious juxtaposition as may be most advantageous to both, and convey the clearest synthetical impression to the reader.

The prominent characteristics of these two poetesses may be designated as the struggles of woman towards happiness, and the struggles of a soul

towards heaven. The one is oppressed with a sense of injustice, and feels the need of human love; the other is troubled with a sense of mortality, and aspires to identify herself with etherial existences. The one has a certain tinge of morbid despondency taking the tone of complaint and the amplification of private griefs; the other too often displays an energetic morbidity on the subject of death, together with a certain predilection for "terrors." The imagination of Mrs. Norton is chiefly occupied with domestic feelings and images, and breathes melodious plaints or indignations over the desecrations of her sex's loveliness; that of Miss Barrett often wanders amidst the supernatural darkness of Calvary sometimes with anguish and tears of blood, sometimes like one who echoes the songs of triumphal quires. Both possess not only great mental energies, but that description of strength which springs from a fine nature, and manifests itself in productions which evidently originated in genuine impulses of feeling. The subjects they both choose appear spontaneous, and not resulting from study or imitation, though cast into careful moulds of art. The one records and laments, the actual; the other creates and exults, in the ideal. Both are excellent artists: the one in dealing with subjects of domestic interest; the other in designs from sacred subjects, poems of religious tendency, or of the supernatural world. Mrs. Norton is beautifully clear and

intelligible in her narrative and course of thought and feeling; Miss Barrett has great inventiveness, but not an equal power in construction. The one is all womanhood; the other all wings. Mrs. Norton is strong in actual experiences, and her sympathies are carried beyond them, even into the hard and painful scenes of juvenile labours, as evidenced in her "Voice from the Factories," first published in 1836. Miss Barrett is rich in the memory of early experiences, but more rich in imaginations and etherial aspirations, and would shrink from the contemplation of unrefined realities. The one writes from the dictates of a human heart in all the eloquence of beauty and individuality; the other like an inspired priestess—not without a most truthful heart, but a heart that is devoted to religion, and whose individuality is cast upward in the divine afflatus, and dissolved and carried off in the recipient breath of angelic ministrants.

Some of Mrs. Norton's songs for music are very lovely, and other of her lyrics have the qualities of sweetness and pathos to a touching and thrilling degree. She has contributed many prose tales full of colour and expression to several of the Annuals; but these, together with her musical talents and editorial labours, are much too popularly known and admired to render any further remarks that we could offer upon them at all requisite.

BANIM

AND

THE IRISH NOVELISTS.

"Great heart, and bright humours, my masters; with a wit that never lingers, and a sorrow that sits with her head under one wing."

OLD COMEDY.

"Certes, sir, your painted eloquence,
So gay, so fresh, and eke so talkative,
It doth transcend the wit of Dame Prudénce
For to declare your thought or to descrive,
So gloriously glad language ye contrive."

CHAUCER.

"Could he dance on the head of him, and think with his heels, then were he a blessed spirit."

OLD IRELAND.

"*Och, Shane Fadh—Shane Fadh, a cushla machree!* you're going to break up the ring—going to lave us, avourneen, for ivver, and we to hear your light foot and sweet voice, morning, noon, and night, no more!"

CARLETON.

BANIM

AND

THE IRISH NOVELISTS.

THE author of the "O'Hara Tales" stands pre-eminent among the delineators of Irish character, and quite distinct from the mere painters of Irish manners. He goes to the very heart and soul of the matter. He is neither the eulogist nor the vilifier, neither the patronising apologist, nor the caricaturist of his countrymen, but their true dramatic historian. Fiction such as his, is truer than any history, because it deals not only with facts and their causes, but with the springs of motive and action. It not only details circumstances, but probes into and discovers the living elements on which circumstances operate. His Irishmen are not strange, unaccountable creatures, but members of the great human family, with a temperament of their own, marking a peculiar race, and his Irishwomen are in especial drawn with the utmost truth and depth of feeling. He knows well the sources of those bitter waters which have

converted the impulsive, generous, simple-minded, humorous, and irascible race with whom he has to deal, into lawless ruffians, or unprincipled knaves. He loves to paint the national character in its genial state, ardent in love, constant in friendship, with a ready tear for the mourner, and a ready laugh for the reveller, overflowing with gratitude for kindness, with open hand and heart, and unsuspicious as a child; and reversing the picture, to show that same character goaded by oppression and contemptuous injustice, into a cruel mocking demon in human form, or into some reckless, libertine, idle, hopeless, tattered rascal. The likeness cannot be disputed. The description carries internal evidence with it. Whoever has been in Ireland remembers illustrations of it, and begins to discover the how and the why of things which before puzzled him. Even those who have never been in Ireland, cannot have gone through their lives without observing the cheerfulness, humour, and gaiety of its natives, even under depressing circumstances, their natural politeness, the warmth of their gratitude, their ready helpfulness, all evidences of a character to be moulded into excellent good form by love and kindness. The reverse of the picture need not be dwelt on. It is the theme of all the world. Irish reprobates and Irish criminals are plentiful. Banim and some few others can teach why they are so.

In the small compass of nine pages of Banim's admirable story called "Crohoore of the Bill-Hook," there is contained what may be called the natural history of "White-boyism," and in those pages is comprised the philosophy of the whole matter, with its illustrations in human tears and drops of blood. In the vivid and exciting description of the White-boy outrage on the tithe-proctor, where the remorseless cruelty is rendered more revolting by its accompaniment of the never-absent Irish humour that makes the torturer comfort his wretched victim before he cuts off his ears, with "Don't be the laste unasy in yoursef, a-gra; you may be right sartin I'll do the thing nate and handy"—how finely does the author claim and obtain impartial justice for the perpetrators, at the tribunal of eternal truth, by the few words with which he prefaces his dreadful narrative. "The legal retribution," says he, "visited on Damien and Ravaillac has found its careful registers: nor in this transcript of real scenes, shall the illegal violence done to an Irish tithe-proctor, want true and courageous historians." Who that has ever had his soul sickened by even a glance into the cold methodical detail of the exquisite tortures, that were each day, and day after day, applied to Ravaillac—the pincers, the fire, the rack, the screw—while the "Do not drive my soul to despair!" was shrieked out in vain, except to be recorded by the witnessing secretary—

every agonized exclamation being carefully noted—who does not feel the force of those words? Despotic power had transformed these legal and highly-polished tormentors into devils. Ignorance, wrong, and ruin had converted those illegal and outcast men of impulse, into mocking savages. Individual character and varied circumstance, acting and re-acting discordantly, these make up the mystery of human woe. Rise to a sufficient elevation, and the criminals might be seen to change places, or all fade into one mass of suffering wanderers in the dark, concerning whom horror and hatred would turn into deep pity; and tears and an effort to save take the place of retribution.

We have been dwelling on the darker and stronger portraits in Banim's works. As an illustration of the humorous, we may take "Andy Houlahan," in the same story of "Crohoore." There he stands, true to the life. "Tall, square, slight, loose, bony," as if he had been put together by chance; "looking like a bold but imperfect sketch of a big fellow;" his "skin fitting tight to his high cheek-bones;" his "expression of good-humour, foolishness, fidget, and subtlety;" his clothes looking as if "they had been tossed on with a pitchfork;" his hat, "that part of every man's costume in its shape and adjustment most redolent of character," going through all the varieties of adjustment, from being "pushed back

to the last holding point of his skull" to being "dragged down into his eyes" according to the mood of the wearer; his long outside coat fallen from his shoulders, pinioning his arms and trailing in the dust or mud; the buttons at his knees, collar, and vest unfastened; his stockings "festooning down to his brogues." Now, of this Andy Houlahan, it is just what is to be expected that he should perpetrate a succession of well-meant blunders, and so he does. He is brave to recklessness in real danger, but as to witches, ghosts, and fairies, an arrant coward; the most loving and faithful creature in the world, yet marring and counteracting every effort to serve the friend he loves best in the world, and nearly getting him hanged at last; then, (after his friend has been saved by other intervention,) pulling down the gallows, and stamping the coffin to shivers; and concluding by startling all the assembled magistrates in grave discussion, by his loud "whoop," when he sees his friend made all right and happy at last; for which finishing stroke he must give his own excuse, "It 's a fashion we have in screechin' that a way, when we 're glad, or sorry, or a thing o' the kind."

Banim's conception of his subject is equal to his skill in the development of character. He has always a definite aim and purpose, and always a plot. However elaborately he may finish his individual

figures, they are always skilfully grouped, and all the groups together make an harmonious whole. His management of his subject is equally fine. He invests it with an interest, humorous, terrible, or pathetic. We are sufficiently behind the scenes to feel with and for his characters, and to attach due importance to his incidents, yet he does not disclose his "mystery" till the proper moment. "Crohoore," is an excellent illustration of this. We defy any one, unless he resort to the unjustifiable expedient of "looking at the end," to divine how all will be explained to his heart's ease and thorough satisfaction at last.

The thrilling interest attached to the history of the young priest in "The Nowlans," affords another instance of the power and passion with which this author works out his conceptions. The struggle between nature and conscience, unnaturally opposed as they are by the vow of celibacy, is here rendered more terrible in its effect by the youth and the ardent, impetuous character of the priest, which fight desperately against his high sense of duty and devotion to his faith. The lovely and refined character of Letty, her sweet, tender, trustful, artless, self-sacrificing spirit, and her excessive yet trembling love for him, obliterating from her consciousness all thought of her own superior station and fortune—all this enhances the deadly effort it cost

them to part for ever, engages our deepest sympathies, and carries us along with them in their horror-stricken flight *together*, when that interview which they had meant to be their last on earth, has united their fates for ever. Then follow the cruel persecution of the world, the vain struggle with its anathema, and the final tragedy—the lone waste cabin in the lone field surrounded by the darkness of night, by the snow and winter wind; the door torn from its hinges and raised on four stones from off the wet floor; upon it the corpse of the beautiful young woman clasping the dead infant to her breast; the rushlight stuck in a lump of yellow clay flickering by their side; at their feet, the young man, kneeling—his face as pale as their's, "with unwinking distended eyes rivetted on the lowly bier."

"The Nowlans" is, perhaps, the finest of Banim's works; but they are all more or less stamped with genius. We could dwell on many more of them; they are, however, all before the public and well known, and their peculiar characteristics are similar to those we have enumerated in this short sketch of "Crohoore" and "The Nowlans."

Lover is a very forcibly effective, and truthful writer of Irish novels, and falls into the ranks after Banim. He has less passion, but more picturesque vivacity. As a writer and composer of songs (not to mention the charming expression with which he

sings them) Mr. Lover is perhaps still more popular, and his ballads have a certain singable beauty in them, and a happy occasional fancifulness. His novels, however, are the stuff whereof his fame is made, and they are highly vital, and of great value in the sense of commentary on the national character.

Who ever read Rory O'More from beginning to end, without being seized with many a fit of uncontrollable laughter, and also shedding some tears?—or who ever began to read it, and left off without reading to the end? Genuine pathos, and as genuine fun—a true love of nature, and simple true-heartedness—are all there; and the dialogues are exquisite, and full of Irish humour.

The writings of William Carleton must not be omitted. If Banim may be characterized as the dramatic historian of his countrymen, Carleton may with equal truth be styled their faithful portrait-painter. He draws from the life. In his manly and unaffected introduction to "Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry," he has given his auto-biography, and explained how it is he can so accurately describe, because he was himself one of them:—A good reason for his knowledge; but in himself is the power to use it with talent and effect.

The Irish Tales of Mrs. S. C. Hall have character and life, tenderness and softness. She has written one or two novels; but the performances she is better

known by, are her miscellaneous light essays or tales, with which the periodical literature of the day is sown abundantly, and the characteristic sketches illustrative of her native Ireland, of which she published a volume not long ago, in conjunction with her husband. Her miscellaneous sketches, in general, are graceful, and womanly in the most amiable sense.

Lever, well known in the popular literature of the day as "Harry Lorrequer," writes Irish novels too, and therefore is mentioned in this place. He has a large circle of readers, and many of them would say they prefer him to anybody else; but if you tried to elicit from them one good reason, they would have no better answer to give than "Oh! he's a capital fellow!" What the French call *material life*, is the whole life he recognizes; and *that* life is a jest, and a very loud one, in his philosophy. The sense of beauty and love he does not recognize at all, except in our modern condition of social animals. To read him is like sitting in the next room to an orgie of gentlemen topers, with their noisy gentility and 'hip! hip! hurras!' and the rattling din of plates and glasses. In his way, he is a very clever writer, nobody can deny; but he is contracted and conventional, and unrefined in his line of conventionality. His best descriptions are of military life. He is most at home in the mess-room. He has undoubted humour and a quick talent of invention of comic scenes, which

generally end in broad farce. He does not represent fairly even the social and jovial side of men of much refinement, or, if he does, he should not represent them as he does, on *all* sides thus social and jovial.

"A capital fellow"—is Lorrequer accounted by his readers, and that expression we take to be the most compact and complete estimate of him. The sort of reader for Harry Lorrequer, is one of those right jovial blades who can dismiss his six dozen of oysters and a tankard of stout "after the play," and then adjourn with some other capital fellows to brandy-and-water and a Welsh rabbit, pleasantly relieved by poached eggs, and cigars, and a comic song; yet rise the next morning without a fraction of headache, without the knowledge of a stomach, and go to breakfast with a fox-hunter.

The present period is certainly destined to display a singular variety, not only in the classes of literary production, but in the different modifications of each class. We think the most omniverous reader would be discomposed by the contrasts, if for his morning's reading he took alternately a chapter from Banim, a chapter from Lady Morgan's "Wild Irish Girl," a chapter from Mrs. S. C. Hall's "Irish Tales," a high-brogue chapter from Lover's "Rory O'More," an after-dinner scene from Harry Lorrequer, and concluded by going to a wake or a wedding with Carleton.

Yours very truly,
Robert Browning.

ROBERT BROWNING

AND

J. W. MARSTON.

"Not with tickling rhymes,
Or common-places filched, that take these times,
But high and noble matter, such as flies
From brains entranced, and filled with ecstacies."

BEN JONSON.

"The art of the poet is to separate from the fable whatever does not essentially belong to it; whatever, in the daily necessities of real life, and the petty occupations to which they give rise, interrupts the progress of important actions."

A. W. SCHLEGEL. *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature.*

"Break Phantasy, from thy cave of cloud,
And spread thy purple wings!
Now all thy figures are allowed,
And various shapes of things."

BEN JONSON.

ROBERT BROWNING

AND

J. W. MARSTON.

THE spirit of passionate and imaginative poetry is not dead among us in the "ignorant present"—it is alive, and of great splendour, filling the eyes and ears of those who by nature and study are fitted to receive such influences. If dazzling lines, passages, and scenes, were asked in proof of this, what an array might instantly be selected from the comparatively little known works of Mr. Browning,—Mr. Darley,—the author of the "Manuscripts of Erdely,"—the author of "Festus," and several others still less known. While the struggle of this spirit to ascend visibly from the denser masses around—a struggle understood by so few, interesting to fewer, believed in by fewer still—while this is going on, there is also a struggle of a more practical kind in

the field of letters, which is well patronized, greatly assisted, and expected to be successful—the spirit of reality, or of the artistical representation of reality. Such is apparently the creed, as it has hitherto been the practice, of Mr. Marston and many others. This is the principle which is thought to be the true representative of the tendency of the present age; so much easier to understand than the ideal; and so sure eventually of triumphant success. Believing in this, Madame Vestris carpeted and upholstered the stage, and Mr. Macready carried the ruinous error to a still greater extent in his "gettings up." But this principle is *not* the true representative of the age; it is not understood much better than the ideal and imaginative, though all mechanical-minded men fully believe they can grasp it,—so palpable it seems; and it will *not* be successful. Hitherto it has always failed. It cannot even obtain a temporary success,—for all the spirit of railroads, and all the steam. Their success is no precedent for art. Art is in a false position among them. The spirit of the Fine Arts cannot be identical with the material forces and improvements of the age, which are progressive—the former is not. Its greatness is self-centred, and revolves in its own proper orbit.

The career of the author of "Paracelsus," extending at present over not much more than half the

period of Mr. Tennyson, presents different features, some of which appear more fortunate and some less. His reception was comparatively good; we may say very good. Several of those periodicals, in which the critics seem disposed to regard poetry of a superior kind as a thing to be respected and studied, hailed the appearance of Mr. Robert Browning with all the honours which can reasonably be expected to be awarded to a new comer, who is moreover alive. In more than one quarter the young poet was fairly crowned. The less intelligent class of critics spoke of him with praise; guarding their expressions with an eye to retreat, if necessary, at any future time, made various extracts, and set him to grow. The rest did what is usual. Now, this reception was, all things considered, very good and promising; the poet had no enemies banded together to hunt and hoot him down, and he had admirers among the best class of critics. Here was a fine table-land whereon to build a reputation, and to make visible to all men those new fabrics of loveliness and intellectual glory which were manifestly germinating in his brain. Mr. Browning's next production was a tragedy, which, "marvellous to relate," he got acted immediately — an event quite unprecedented on the modern stage, except with those two or three dramatic authors who have previously passed through the customary delays preceding representation. It

succeeded, as the saying is, but was not very attractive, and being printed "as acted," did not advance the poet's reputation. After this, Mr. Browning went to Italy, where he appears to have felt himself far too happy for the work that was before him; his spiritual existence drinking in draughts too deep and potent of the divine air, and all the intense associations of the scenes in which he dwelt, and dreamed, and revelled, to suffer him to apply a steady strength, to master his own impulses, and to subdue the throng of elementary materials, so as to compress them into one definite design, suited to the general understandings of mankind.

After a silence of four years, the poet published "Sordello," which has proved, and will inevitably continue to prove, the richest puzzle to all lovers of poetry which was ever given to the world. Never was extraordinary wealth squandered in so extraordinary a manner by any prodigal son of Apollo. Its reception, if not already known to the reader, may be guessed without much difficulty; but the poem has certainly never been fairly estimated. The last publications of Mr. Browning are in a dramatic form and spirit; they were issued at intervals, and we trust will continue—the series bearing the title of "Bells and Pomegranates." The public has treated them hitherto, we believe,

with less neglect than is usual with dramatic productions which have not been substantiated to the understanding by stage representation, although it is still to be feared that the title of the series has not induced any anticipative sympathy.

Mr. Marston's first work was the play of the "Patrician's Daughter," and was the subject of a second "marvel," for this also obtained speedy representation. To this play, as to Mr. Browning's "Strafford," Mr. Macready took a sudden fancy—fatal omen of invariable results! Both of these works are examples of men of genius going astray, the one turning tragedy into a spasmodic skeleton, the other carrying the appointments of what is technically and degradingly termed "a coat-and-breeches comedy" into the tragic arena, and wounding Art with real-life weapons. The play has had some temporary success; but it will only be temporary. Mr. Marston's next work was "Gerald," a poem in a dramatic form, illustrative of the old melancholy story of the struggles of Genius with the experiences of the actual world. The subject of Mr. Browning's first work, was in some respects similar; but the struggles of "Paracelsus" are always treated poetically, while those of "Gerald" have a harsh matter-of-fact tone—for such is the principle of "realizing" in art.

"Paracelsus" is evidently the work of a young

poet of premature powers—of one who sought to project his imagination beyond the bounds of his future, as well as present, experience, and whose intellect had resolved to master all the results thus obtained. We say the powers were premature, simply because such a design could only be conceived by the most vigorous energies of a spirit just issuing forth with "blazing wings," too full of strength and too far of sight to believe in the ordinary laws and boundaries of mortality. It is the effort of a mind that wilfully forgets, and resolves to set aside its corporeal conditions. Even its possible failure is airily alluded to at the outset, and treated in the same way, not merely as no sort of reason for hesitating to make the attempt to gain "forbidden knowledge," but as a result which is solely referable to the Cause of its own aspirations and impulses.

"What though
It be so? If indeed the strong desire
Eclipse the aim in me? If splendour break
Upon the outset of my path alone,
And duskest shade succeed? What fairer seal
Shall I require to my authentic mission
Than this fierce energy? This instinct striving
Because its nature is to strive? Enticed
By the security of no broad course—
Where error is not, but success is sure.
How know I else such glorious fate my own,
But in the restless irresistible force
That works within me? Is it for human will

To institute such impulses? Still less
To disregard their promptings? What should I
Do, kept among you all; your loves, your cares,
Your life—all to be mine? Be sure that God
Ne'er dooms to waste the strength he deigns impart.
Ask the gier-eagle why she stoops at once
Into the vast and unexplored abyss!
What full-grown power informs her from the first,
Why she not marvels, strenuously beating
The silent boundless regions of the sky!"

Paracelsus, pp. 18, 19.

It should be observed that reference is made exclusively to the poet's creation, not to the "Paracelsus" of history. The higher destinies of man, which are conceived by the "Paracelsus" we are contemplating, as attainable on earth, are thus sublimely intimated:—

"The wide East, where old Wisdom sprung;
The bright South, where she dwelt; the populous North,
All are pass'd o'er—it lights on me. 'Tis time
New hopes should animate the world—new light
Should dawn from new revealings to a race
Weigh'd down so long, forgotten so long; so shall
The heaven reserv'd for us at last, receive
No creatures whom unwonted splendours blind,
But ardent to confront the unclouded blaze,
Whose beams not seldom lit their pilgrimage;
Not seldom glorified their life below."

Paracelsus, p. 20.

A Promethean character pervades the poem throughout; in the main design, as well as the

varied aspirations and struggles to attain knowledge, and power, and happiness for mankind. But at the same time there is an intense craving after the forbidden secrets of creation, and eternity, and power, which place "Paracelsus" in the same class as "Faust," and in close affinity with all those works, the object of which is an attempt to penetrate the mysteries of existence—the infinity within us and without us. Need it be said, that the result is in all the same?—and the baffled magic—the sublime occult—the impassioned poetry—all display the same ashes which were once wings. The form, the mode, the impetus and course of thought and emotion, admit, however, of certain varieties, and "Paracelsus" is an original work. Its aim is of the highest kind; in full accord and harmony with the spirit of the age; and we admit that it has been accomplished, in so far as such a design can well be: for since the object of all such abstractions as Paracelsus must necessarily fail, individually and practically, the true end obtained is that of refining and elevating others, by the contemplation of such efforts, and giving a sort of polarity to the vague impulses of mankind towards the lofty and the beneficent. It also endeavours to sound the depths of existence for hidden treasures of being.

Living a long life—dreaming a lofty dream—working and suffering, Paracelsus now lies dead

before us! Behold an epitome of the course he ran! Paracelsus aspires. He has a glorious vision of the discovery of hidden knowledge never as yet revealed to man. He believes that if he constantly seeks it, and works for it, he shall attain it; and that, were it not possible, these "vast longings" would not be "sent to direct us." He "stands at first, where all aspire at last," and pursues the ever-fleeting "secret of the world," of man and our ultimate destiny. He searches at home and abroad; but, chief of all, he searches within himself, believing that there is "an inmost centre in us all, where truth abides in fulness;" and that to *know*,

> "Rather consists in opening out a way
> Whence the imprisoned splendour may dart forth,
> Than in effecting entry for a light
> Supposed to be without."

Filled with the divine portion of truth, which he mistakes for the whole, Paracelsus pursues his labours, "serene amidst the echoes, beams, and glooms," yet struggling onward with impassioned will, and subduing his life "to the one purpose whereto he has ordained it," till at length he "attains" — But what? — Imperfect knowledge! He finds that knowledge without love is intellect without heart, and a bitter, as it must ever be a certain, disappointment. Paracelsus looks around him, and renews his labours.

"This life of mine
Must be lived out, and a grave thoroughly earned."

He becomes a miraculous physician — professor of medicine at Basil; and his cures, his dòctrines, and his fame are noised abroad in the world. But he is not satisfied: he feels the poverty of such reputation, when compared with what he would do for the human race. Again Paracelsus aspires. What his object is in this part of the poem is not so clear; but knowledge, and love, and disappointed efforts, and fresh struggles and apprehensions, are all at work, while Paracelsus is at the same time full of anguish at the persecution which now hunts him from place to place, as an impostor and a quack. His feelings often display strong signs of over-tasked powers, and impel his mind along the borders of delirium and madness. He looks back upon the past, where "the heaving sea is black behind;" and in the miseries and horrors of the present, he feels at times that "there is a hand groping amid the darkness to catch us."

The closing scene is near. Paracelsus finally "attains." And what? — Purified feelings, and a clear knowledge of what may, and may *not* be. He is on the brink of the grave, and of eternity; a sublime fire is before his path, a constant music is in his ears, and a melting into "bliss for evermore." True to his ruling passion, he pauses a moment to speculate on his momentous state — the awful threshold on which

he stands—for a last chance of discovering "some further cause for this peculiar mood;" but it "has somehow slipt away" from him. He stands in "his naked spirit so majestical," and full, once more, of ennobling hopes, looks forward to the time when man shall commence the infancy of a higher state of being. Then, with one last sigh over the "waste and wear" of faculties "displayed in vain, but born to prosper in some better sphere," the old heart-broken philosopher closes his eyes in death. His awe-stricken friend, standing mute for hours over the pale clay, at length slowly murmurs—

"And this was Paracelsus!"

The genius of Mr. Marston has hitherto displayed a misgiving originality—or a fancied originality—self-confident at its first launch upon the tide, and midway calling for help from the past, and supporting its sinking venture by all manner of old associations. He took the bull by the horns, and let him go again; the consequence has been that he has only aggravated and exalted the power he intended to tame or transfer. He intended to show that the bull was a real thing, and the provocation transforms it to a Jupiter. The principle on which the "Patrician's Daughter" was written, (a kind of following in the track of the "Lady of Lyons,") was to prove that reality and the present time constituted the best material and medium for modern poetry, especially

dramatic poetry. Now this very play contains as many antiquated words and phrases as any modern drama written in direct imitation of the Elizabethan dramatists. As an acting tragedy it has failed to take any satisfactory hold upon the stage—for ladies with fashionable parasols, and gentlemen in grenadiers' caps, are an outrage to tragic art, which appeals to the hearts and businesses of men through universal sympathies; and inasmuch as it cannot be aided by matter-of-fact costumes, so it may be injured by ugliness in that respect, more particularly when it constantly calls back (instead of stimulating) the imagination, and reminds it that all this pretended reality is *not* real. An extract from De Quincy's "Essay on Imitation in the Fine Arts," will make this question more clear:—

"The first error of the artist,—consists in stepping beyond his art to seek in the resources of another, an increase of *imitative resemblance*. The second error of the artist,—consists in seeking truth (short of the limits of every art) by a system of servile copy, which deprives the imitation or the image, of *that fictitious part which constitutes at once its essence and its character*.

"In every art there must be with respect to truth some *fiction*, and with respect to resemblance something incomplete."

In the delineation of his chief character, moreover, Mr. Marston commits the very dangerous error of saying prodigious things of his hero's abilities, but not showing his greatness by his actions.

Among other extravagancies he calls him "the apostle of his age," and shows no shadow of justification for the title.

We have here to mention, chiefly for the sake of reprehension, the numerous reality tragedies of the author of "The Shepherd's Well." Some are printed with his name, some not; but they are all of one family. This gentleman has attempted to introduce real-life, common-place colloquial dialogue into tragedy,—not as prose tragedy, but in the form of verse. Whatever ability he may display in the conception of subjects, we certainly think that his method of execution defeats the design. The perfectly domestic drama should be presented in a perfectly domestic form. Rapidity of production is also apt to degenerate into reckless impulse. A tragedy at three sittings appears to be Mr. Powell's rate of work. Five mortal acts as a few hours' amusement! But they are *not* acts. They are interludes to display a catastrophe. These compositions have the merit of one idea; and sometimes a very fine and striking one it would prove, if properly worked out; but having reserved this idea for the last scene of his last act, the author seems to think that any mass of introductory or irrelevant matter, may be cut into four parts — and *then* comes Act the Fifth, and the one stinging idea. That he has "stuff' in him of a good kind, if fairly worked upon, and

with any justice done to its own nature, is evident, though it may be doubted from these specimens whether he will ever be a dramatist. But, in the first place, and in any case, we object to the principle of *realizing* in dramatic composition, however admirably the intention were executed. "The Blind Wife," the "Wife's Revenge;" "Marguerite;" "Marion," &c. &c. are all instances of the error, carried to its extreme, and with a fairness that brings the question at once to an issue. It ought to be added that the "Shepherd's Well" is by far the best of these productions, and not only has fine elements of feeling and purpose in its conception, but is executed in a style of more care and poetical refinement (with the striking exception of "True at Last") than any of the rest of this large "young family." It is a great pity that six months' labour was not bestowed upon so finely conceived a subject.

That a composition intended for the stage, which was the second production of Mr. Browning, should be very different from an epic or psychological poem, will excite no surprise; but that it should contain so few incidental touches of that peculiar genius which he had previously displayed, is a curious circumstance to remark. Paracelsus was an ebullition of the poet's powers. The tragedy of "Strafford" is a remarkable instance of the suppression of them. It was a strange mistake, with regard to the tragic

principle, which needs the highest consummation of poetry and passion, so that each shall be either or both; whereas "Strafford" was a piece of passionate action with the bones of poetry. It was a maimed thing, all over patches and dashes, with the light showing through its ribs, and the wind whistling through its arms and legs; while in its head and echoing in its heart, was sung its passion for a king. It was printed as "acted." What it might have been originally is impossible to say, but we have some difficulty in conceiving how it could have been put together with so many disjointed pieces in the first instance. The number of dashes and gaps of omission made its pages often resemble a Canadian field in winter, after a considerable thoroughfare of snow-shoes.

But it is ever the "trick of genius" to do something which we do not expect; and turning to the series, issued under the pretty and most unsatisfactory title of "Bells and Pomegranates," we discover Mr. Browning to possess the finest dramatic genius. This assertion might almost be hazarded, had he never written anything but the powerful scenes between Ottima and Sebald, in No. 1 of the series. His "King Victor and King Charles" is a complete tragedy. It appears in the form of two main divisions, each of which is also divided into two parts, yet presenting one entire and perfectly united drama. It is

properly a tragedy in four acts, with the interval of about a twelvemonth between the second and third. The characters are drawn with a fine and masterly hand, and the scenes in which they appear are full of nice shades and gradations, and subtle casuistries of the passions, and are not only dramatic in an intellectual sense, but would be so to the feeling and to the eye, if duly represented. It is another proof, among the many already existing, that the unacted drama is incomparably superior to the melodramatic plays and farces adopted by managers.

The action in "King Victor and King Charles" is so finely intervolved, though so very clear to the understanding, and its scenes are so thoroughly dependent upon each other, even for ordinary effect, that extracts can do no justice to its artistic structure.

The same author's tragedy of the "Return of the Druses" is, in conception, still finer. The main requisites for a successful acting tragedy are character and passionate action—and these the "Druses" possesses in the highest degree; the next requisite is the perspicuous distribution of the action—and here this tragedy is deficient, but in a way that might easily be remedied, and with far less trouble than is always taken with the works of Mr. Knowles, or Sir Edward Bulwer, or with any of the "great discoveries" and failures of Mr. Macready. The character of Djabal is a masterpiece, and of the highest order of

dramatic portraiture. It is at once complicated and clear; the motives intervolved and conflicting, yet "palpable to feeling as to sight;" and all his actions, their results, and his own end, are perfectly in harmony with these premises. Anything in him that puzzles us, is only in the progress of the drama; for eventually he stands out in the finest relief, as though upon "the mountain," to which his dying steps lead on his emancipated people.

Of a similar kind in design and structure to "The Patrician's Daughter," is the poem of "Gerald," by the same author. It is another form of the idea of a man of genius struggling with the world of the present time. The scenes are laid in such places as Hyde Park, the High Road, at Bayswater, &c., and the language having a strong smack of the olden time. The poem may be designated as a narrave dialogue and reverie, in which a series of emotions and thoughts, and a few events, are brought before us. They are all very like private experiences poetized, philosophized, and moralized upon. It may also be doubted whether the author's faculties have attained their maturity, judging by the love he has for displaying his good things in Italics, evidently showing that he considers the ideas as very new, which they frequently are not, though perhaps expressed in a novel form. But the gravest fault is of the same kind as that in his previous

work, *viz.*, the author gives us no proof that his hero *is* a man of genius. Gerald says:—

> "In my solitude,
> While bending o'er the page of bards, to feel
> Their greatness fill my soul, and albeit then
> The lofty meaning I could scarce translate,
> To quiver with an awful, vague delight,
> And find my heart respond, although no sense
> Outran my thought! What, shall no harvest burst
> From seed like this?"
>
> *Gerald*, p. 11.

We answer "very likely not any." If any, then most likely a reproduction of the thoughts of others, the seeds of which have inspired him. All that he says in proof of an impulse and capacity, is in itself only poetical emotion, which should not be mistaken (as it always is in youth) for poetical genius. Gerald leaves his home feeling a strong impulse to do *something* great in the world. Here at once we see the old sad error—a vague aspiration or ambition mistaken for an object and a power. A man of genius rushes out of his solitude, or takes some extreme step, because he is possessed with a ruling passion,—a predominating idea,—a conviction that he can accomplish a particular thing, and so relieve his breast of the ever-smouldering image—his imagination of the ever-haunting thought. He does not rush forth with expanded arms to grasp at whatever presents itself to his inflamed desires, but to grasp

his soul's idol. In like manner—to come down to details—a man of genius never snatches a pen, and sits down to write whatever comes uppermost; (or if he do so, now and then, it is because he is in a morbid state, and will most likely burn what he has written;) but to write down a sudden revelation of a definite kind. We think, that towards the close of his work Mr. Marston discovered this; in fact, we see signs that he did; but it was too late, and all he could do was to make his hero accuse himself of a selfish ambition as an excuse for his want of success.

So much for these heroes; but that the author of both these works is a man of genius, and one of the moving spirits of the time, no doubt can exist. Mr. Marston's writings are full of thoughtful beauty, of religious aspiration, and affectionate tenderness. He has also acquired considerable reputation as a Lecturer, and is in other respects likely to have a prosperous career before him—a career which at present he has not commenced in that fullness of strength which we anticipate he will shortly develope.

Having spoken of the realizing attempts of the author of the "Shepherd's Well," "True at Last," &c. &c., with regard to the drama, it will be only justice merely to remark, that this is not the case with his other poetical productions. He possesses much talent in lyrical composition, and his poems of the affections have great beauty. Many of the other

pieces are of a very restless and unequal description. They breathe too much of death, and a morbid harping upon religious forms and dogmas. If we were to select those which we like best, they would be from among his smaller poems of a few stanzas each; and we could pick out many sonnets, which are excellent in thought, imagery, and harmonious versification. His longer poems want design and order—to say nothing of some care and consistency. For instance, in his poem entitled "A Dream of Arcadi," he thinks proper to see a splendid cathedral, to hear a fine organ and anthems, and to delight his senses with the fumes of incense, amidst crowds of devotees. High-mass in Arcadia! For the rest, however, every one must feel the interfusing presence of the poetic spirit; nor can any confusion of time, place, form, and of purpose (or the want of purpose), prevent that sympathy which follows even the wildest touch upon the chords of universal emotion.

To that somewhat extensive class of readers who are of opinion that poetry, so far from being a thing to study, should be so plain, that "all who run may read," and who take up the works of Mr. Browning with that view, we should premise that they might just as well run another way. In "Paracelsus" the difficulties were in the quantity and quality of thought; in "Sordello" there is the additional difficulty of an impracticable style. In proportion

to the depth or novelty of a thought, the poet has chosen to render the vehicle difficult in which it is conveyed—sometimes by its erudite elaboration of parenthesis within parenthesis, and question upon query—sometimes by its levity, jaunting indifference, and apparent contempt of everything —sometimes it has an interminable period, or one the right end of which you cannot find; a knotted serpent, which either has no discoverable tail, or has several, the ends of which are in the mouths of other serpents, or else flanking in the air —sometimes it has a series of the shortest possible periods, viz. of one word, or of two or three words. And amidst all this there is at frequent intervals a dark hailstone shower of proper names—names of men and women, and places, and idealities, with which only one general reader in about twenty thousand can be expected to be familiar, and with the whole of which the style of the poet seems courteously to assume that all his readers are upon the most familiar terms possible. Under these circumstances it can be no wonder that such of the miscellaneous public as take up a poem by way of a little *relaxation* shrunk back in hopeless dismay; nor that the more numerous class of daily and weekly critics, whose judgments are, from the very nature of their position, compelled in most cases to be as hasty as their hands, which "write against time," should have

been glad to dismiss "Sordello" in an angry paragraph. In a few instances the critics appeared to have read a portion of it; in the great majority of instances it was not read at all, which fact was evident in the notice, and in several instances was boldly declared by the irate critic as a task beyond his sublunary powers. And this no doubt was true.

> "Who will, may hear Sordello's story told:
> His story?"

The author is bewitched at the very outset with an inability to "get on with his story;" and he never recovers this bad beginning. The historical ground-plan of the work is laid down after a most bewildering fashion:—

> So Guelfs rebuilt
> Their houses; not a drop of blood was spilt
> When Cino Bocchimpane chanced to meet
> Buccio Virtù; God's wafer, and the street
> Is narrow! Tutti Santi, think, a-swarm
> With Ghibellins, and yet he took no harm.
> This could not last. Off Salinguerra went
> To Padua, Podestà," &c.
>
> *Sordello*, p. 7.

Adding to the vague or conflicting historical accounts whatever fictions were agreeable to his fancy, the poet has thus successfully succeeded in bewildering himself and his readers, amidst the elaborate webs of all manner of real and ideal events and biographies. Whether to the purpose of his

psychologically digressive narrative, or merely as an association suggested (to himself) by the last remark he has made, he never lets you off. Speaking of Adelaide, and the Kaiser's gold, and Monk Hilary, who is on his knees—

> "Now, sworn to kneel and pray till God shall please
> Exact a punishment for many things
> You know *and some you never knew; which brings*
> *To memory*, Azzo's sister Beatrix
> And Richard's Giglia are my Alberic's
> And Ecelin's betrothed; the Count himself
> Must get my Palma: Ghibellin and Guelf
> Mean to embrace each other. So began
> Romano's missive to his fighting-man
> Taurello on the Tuscan's death, away
> With Friedrich sworn to sail from Naples' bay
> Next month for Syria."
>
> *Sordello*, p. 81.

Intending to say several things in token of admiration, amidst all the off-hand severities of contemporaries that have been vented upon "Sordello," it nevertheless seemed right to display some of the heaviest faults of the poem at the outset. Having done this unsparingly, the far more pleasant, even though the far more arduous task remains. The following are offered as opinions and impressions of the work, regarding it as a whole:—

The poem of "Sordello" is an attempt to carry out the impossible design in which the author's previous hero, "Paracelsus," had so admirably

failed. It is as though the poet, having created a giant, whose inevitable fall in the attempt to scale the heavens had been so fully explained, was resolved himself to follow in the same track with all the experience and power thus derived; and, moreover, with the consciousness of being the real and vital essence which had called that idealism into existence, and less likely, therefore, to "go off" into fine air, not being amenable to the same laws. Sordello takes up the asbestos lamp from the inmost chamber of the tomb of Paracelsus, and issues forth with it into the world, being already far on the way towards the outlet which leads to other worlds, or states of being, and perhaps to the borders of infinity. Paracelsus, while dying, came to the conviction that men were already beginning "to pass their nature's bounds;" that a fine instinct guided them beyond the power of mere knowledge or experience, and that they were—

> ——— "all ambitious, upwards tending,
> Like plants in mines, which never saw the sun,
> But dream of him and guess where he may be,
> And do their best to climb and get to him."

He had, moreover, a sentient perception, "beyond the comprehension of our narrow thought, but somehow felt and known in every shift and change of the spirit within—of what God is, of what we are, and what life is." Now, we should reply to

Paracelsus, and to all who, like him, have suffered their imaginative sensibilities to reason them into such notions, that they *deceive themselves*, although the truth is *in* them. Full, however, of this sublime deception, Sordello tunes his harp, and works through all the complicated chords and mazes of harmony with indefatigable zeal, from the first note to the end. In the last book of "Sordello" we find the poet almost using the same expressions as in the last book of "Paracelsus." Here we learn that his truth—

> "Lighted his old life's every shift and change,
> Effort with counter-effort; nor the range
> Of each looked wrong except wherein it checked
> Some other—which of these could he suspect
> Prying into them by the sudden blaze?
> The real way seemed made up of all the ways—
> Mood after mood of the one mind in him;
> Tokens of the existence, bright or dim,
> Of a transcendent all-embracing sense
> Demanding only outward influence,
> A soul, in Palma's phrase, above his soul,
> Power to uplift his power," &c.
>
> *Sordello*, pp. 217, 218.

Exactly so: he only wants that very thing which has been denied to mortality since the beginning of things. Despairing of this, and doubting whether any external power in nature be adequate to forward his desire, Sordello finally moots the question of whether he may be ordained a prouder fate—"a law

to his own sphere?" Sordello dies, and the whole amount of his transcendental discoveries may be summed up in the poet's question—

"What has Sordello found?"

To which no reply is given.

Such is the most simplified account the present student can offer of the main object of the poem of "Sordello," carved out from the confused "story," and broken, mazy, dancing sort of narrative no-outline, which has occasioned so much trouble, if not despair, to his most patient and pains-taking admirers. Some have thought that the general purport of the poem was to show that mere material things and matters of fact were a mistaken object of life, only leading to disappointment and sorrow; and that in the ideal world alone, true contentment, satisfaction, and happiness were to be found; others have contended, on the contrary, that it is intended to display the impossibility of attaining to a knowledge of the essences of things, that a life passed amidst idealisms is one of inutility and sorrow, and that the true object of man should be to discover and attain the best realities. But a third view suggests itself. It is probable that Sordello is not devoted to either of the above purposes exclusively, but comprising both, displays the hopes and the despairs, the value and the inutility of both, when followed with the devotion of the whole being. The selection is left to the reader's

individual nature, in such proportions as may accord with that nature.

As to the poetry of "Sordello," apart from all these disquisitions, we think it abounds with beauties. We should offer as one instance (it cannot be extracted on account of its length) the matchless description of the poetical mind of the noblest order, as typified in Sordello, from the bottom of page 20 to the top of page 25. Of the childhood of Sordello, a beautiful description is given, — at pp. 26—28.

The complex working of the youthful mind of the poet is illustrated in a very happy manner:

> "Thus thrall reached thrall;
> He o'er-festooning every interval
> As the adventurous spider, making light
> Of distance, shoots her threads from depth to height,
> From barbican to battlement; so flung
> Fantasies forth and in their centre swung
> Our architect."
>
> *Sordello*, p. 29.

At page 69, there are several passages highly illustrative of some of our previous remarks on the philosophy of "Sordello;" but the simple matter-of-fact beauty of the following must be apparent to the reader:

> "In Mantua-territory half is slough,
> Half pine-tree forest; maples, scarlet-oaks
> Breed o'er the river beds; even Mincio chokes

> With sand the summer through; but 'tis morass
> In winter up to Mantua walls."
>
> *Sordello*, p. 17.

The whole of page 39, might be quoted for its pastoral loveliness.

Containing, as it does, so many passages of the finest poetry, no manner of doubt can exist but that "Sordello" has been hitherto treated with great injustice. It has been condemned in terms that would lead any one to suppose there was nothing intelligible throughout the whole poem. We have shown its defects in detail, and we have also shown that it has some of the highest beauties. The style, the manner, the broken measure, the recondite form; these have constituted still greater difficulties than even the recondite matter of which it treats—though the latter only were quite enough to "settle" or "unsettle" an ordinary reader.

But how speak of the poem synthetically—how review it as a whole? In what terms shall we endeavour to express the sum of our impressions of thousands of verses poured forth, as Sordello says, "by a mad impulse nothing justified, short of Apollo's presence?" In sobriety of language it is not to be done, save most unfittingly. In what fine rapture, then, shall we seek to lose our mere critical faculties, and resign ourselves to the swift and wayward current of the verse; now basking in its bril-

liancy, now merged in its profound shadows, at one time whirled in a vortex, and the next moment cast upon some vast shelving strand, glistening all over with flints, and diamonds, and broken shells, where strange amphibious creatures crawl, and stare, or *wink*, while the song of Sordello passes over our prostrate head, and we have to scramble up and stagger after the immortal quire, vainly catching at the torn and cast-off segments of their flickering skirts? We hurry on in fond yet vain pursuit, when suddenly a Guelf and Ghibellin appear before us, each with an enormous urn of antique mould, which they invert above our tingling cranium, and instantly we are half extinguished and quite overwhelmed by a dark shower of notes and memoranda from Tiraboschi, Nostradamus, the Latin treatise of Dante, the Chronicle of Rolandin, the Comments on the sixth Canto of the Purgatorio, by Benvenuto d'Imola, and all the most recondite hints from the most learned and minute biographical lexicographers of the old Italian periods.

The poem of "Sordello" is a beautiful globe, which, rolling on its way to its fit place among the sister spheres, met with some accident which gave it such a jar that a multitude of things half slipt into each other's places. It is a modern hieroglyphic, and should be carved on stone for the use of schools and colleges. Professors of poetry should decypher

and comment upon a few lines every morning before breakfast, and young students should be *ground* upon it. It is a fine mental exercise, whatever may be said or thought to the contrary. Here and there may be found passages equal to the finest things that were ever written, and not more difficult to the understanding than those same finest things. It is also full of passages apparently constructed with a view to make the general reader rage and foam, if ever a general reader should push forth his adventurous boat out of sight of the shore of the first page—and out of sight it will surely appear to him before he has doubled the storm-rejoicing cape of page four. To some it will appear to be a work addressed to the perception of a seventh sense, or of a class of faculties which we do not at present know that we possess—if we really do possess. To others it will seem to be a work written in the moon by the only sane individual of that sphere, *viz.*, the man of that ilk; or a work written by a poet somewhere in the earth by the light of a remote sun whose rays are unrevealed to other eyes. To some the most vexatious part of it will be the countless multitude of little abrupt snatches of questions, snaps of answers, and inscrutable exclamations, chirping around from every branch of a wilderness or a jungle of glimmering mysteries. To others the continual consciousness of the reader's presence will most annoy, because it destroys the ideal life, and

reminds him of something far less agreeable — himself, and his distracting problem! The flowing familiar style sometimes reminds us of Shelley's "Julian and Maddalo" with a touch of Keat's "Endymion," broken up into numerous pit-falls, whether mines of thought or quirks of fancy; but there are also other occasions when it becomes spiral, and of sustained inspiration, not unlike certain parts of the "Prometheus Unbound" put into rhyme; yet is it no imitation of any other poet. Certain portions also remind us of the suggestive, voluble, disconnected, philosophical jargon of Shakspere's fools, and with all the meaning which they often have for those who can find it. The poem is thick-sown throughout with suggestions and glances of history and biography, of dark plots, tapestried chambers, eyes behind the arras, clapping doors, dreadful galleries, and deeds in the dark, over which there suddenly bursts a light from on high, and looking up you find a starry shower, as from some remote rocket, descending in silent brilliancy upon the dazzled page. Each book is full of gems set in puzzles. It is like what the most romantic admirers of Goëthe insist upon "making out" that he intended in his simplest fables. It is the poetical portion of three epics, shaken together in a sack and emptied over the hand of the intoxicated reader. It is a perfect storehouse of Italian scenery and exotic fruits, plants, and

flowers; so much so, that by the force of contrast it brings to mind the half-dozen flowers and pastoral common-places in collections of "Beauties of English Poets," till the recollection of the sing-song repetitions makes one almost shout with laughter. It is pure Italian in all its materials. There is not one drop of British ink in the whole composition. Nay, there is no ink in it, for it is all written in Tuscan grape juice, embrowned by the sun. It abounds in things addressed to a second sight, and we are often required to *see double* in order to apprehend its meaning. The poet may be considered the Columbus of an impossible discovery. It is a promised land, spotted all over with disappointments, and yet most truly a land of promise, if ever so rich and rare a chaos can be developed into form and order by revision, and its southern fulness of tumultuous heart and scattered vineyards be ever reduced to given proportion, and wrought into a shape that will fit the average mental vision and harmonize with the more equable pulsations of mankind.

SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON.

—— "Pitch thy project high!
Sink not in spirit. Who aimeth at the sky
Shoots higher much than if he meant a tree.
Let thy mind still be bent, still plotting where,
And when, and how, the business may be done."

GEORGE HERBERT.

B—— "whom all the Graces taught to please,
Mixed mirth with morals, eloquence with ease.
His genius social, as his judgment clear;
When frolic, prudent; smiling when severe.
Secure each temper and each taste to hit,
His was the curious happiness of wit."

MALLET.

SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON.

It should be remembered to the honour of Sir Bulwer Lytton, that although born to an independence and to the prospect of a fortune, and inheriting by accident of birth an advantageous position in society, he has yet cultivated his talent with the most unremitting assiduity, equal to that of any "poore scholar," and has not suffered his "natural gifts" to be smothered by indolence or the pleasures of the world. He is one of the most prolific authors of our time; and his various accomplishments, habits of research, and extraordinary industry, no less than his genius, well entitle him to the rank he holds as one of the most successful, in that branch of literature in which he eminently excels. We must not be dazzled by his versatility; we entertain no doubts about his real excellence, and shall endeavour to fix his true and definite position.

Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton is the youngest son of General Bulwer, of Heydon Hall, in the county of Norfolk, and of Elizabeth, daughter and heiress of Henry Warburton Lytton, Esq., of Knebworth Park, Herts, to the possession of which estate he has just succeeded; and is connected on both sides of the house, with many noble and ancient families. He sat in parliament at an early age for the borough of St. Ives, and subsequently for the city of Lincoln. His parliamentary career was highly creditable, and in one respect, in especial, has left an honourable testimonial to his exertions; we allude to the bill for the protection of dramatic copyright, which he brought in and carried. He distinguished himself at the same time as an able political writer. As a speaker, he had won the respect of the House, though his voice is weak, his manner somewhat hesitating, and his style more florid than accords with the taste of that assembly. His train of argument surmounted these disadvantages, and, what was more difficult still, induced honourable members to overlook a certain appearance of fastidious nicety in dress, which by no means accords with their notions in general. He was made a baronet; the date and occasion of which event we forget. His political labours interfered not in the least with his literary career, to the progress of which we now turn.

The development of his literary taste is ascribed to

the influence of his mother, to whose charge he was early consigned by his father's death. The "Percy's Reliques" was a favourite book of his childhood, and he wrote some ballads in imitation, when only five or six years old. He was never sent to any public school, but graduated at Cambridge. He, however, found for himself a kind of education,—which was probably of more importance to the development of genius than any he received in the University,—by wandering over the greater part of England and Scotland on foot during the long vacation, and afterwards making a similar tour of France on horseback. He began to publish when only two or three and twenty, at first in verse; next anonymously a novel now forgotten, entitled "Falkland." It hence appears that his early attempts were failures. His first successful work was "Pelham," and this established his reputation as a clever novelist. It was rapidly followed by "The Disowned," by "Devereux;" and then by "Paul Clifford," which stamped him as a man of genius. "Eugene Aram" well sustained the high reputation thus gained.

There was a considerable interval between these two fine works last named, and the other novels and romances of their author, in which he undertook the editorship of the "New Monthly Magazine." His own papers, of which he wrote many, were various in subject; sometimes political, sometimes literary

criticism. A series entitled "The Conversations of an Ambitious Student" was in general devoted to abstract speculation. The best of these were afterwards re-published under the title of "the Student." The germ of many of the thoughts embodied and developed in these papers belongs to Hazlitt; but the germ has power and life sufficient to bear the branching stems, and foliage and fruit, with which it was elaborated by Bulwer, and in a manner that was often worthy of it. If the saying attributed to Sir Edward concerning his editorship is true, it belongs to that "dandiacal" portion of him, which disagreeably interferes with one's confidence in his sincerity; for if he said he became an Editor "to show that a gentleman might occupy such a position," it must simply be set down to the same Beau-Brummel idiosyncracy which makes him seriously careful of the "cut and fashion" so minutely explained in "Pelham." But it was only a "flourish of the *queue*," whoever said it. The motive was more worthy; and if a proof were wanting, the papers of the "Student," might be referred to, in which the aim is always high and pure. "England and the English," was more the work of the man of the world, and the member of Parliament, superadded to the thinker. No doubt it contains some exaggerations, but it is correct in the main, and is an admirably applied and much required dose for our overweening conceit

of our national prejudices and pride. It might have been entitled "An Exposition of the Influences of Aristocracy."

A return to the region of fiction was perhaps accelerated by a tour on the Continent. Passing over the "Pilgrims of the Rhine," a piece of prettiness and elegance in literature, beautifully illustrated,—a work which, to use appropriate language, a perfect gentleman might permit himself to write for a thousand pounds—we see Sir Edward Bulwer in his own element again upon the publication of his "Last Days of Pompeii;" followed by "Rienzi," and, at intervals wonderfully short, by "Ernest Maltravers," "Alice," "Night and Morning," "Zanoni," and "The Last of the Barons."

Had the author of these works—giving evidence of a range and variety of intellect, invention, and genius sufficient to satisfy a high ambition—attempted no other walk of genius, he would have stood above and beyond the analytical portion of criticism, and commanded its far more worthy and genial office of synthetical appreciation of excellence. But he has aimed at the fame of a poet, and a dramatist, besides. Those who are used to think of Sir Edward Bulwer as a uniformly successful author; a sort of magician under whose wand paper will always turn into gold, do not know that several already forgotten poems and tales have been put forth by him

since his acquirement of popularity, the very names of which sound strange. "Ismael, an Oriental Tale," "Leila, or the Siege of Granada," "The Siamese Twins" have gone into forgetfulness; and "Eva and other poems and tales," are not destined to a long life. Then there have been patriotic songs, and odes, in which there was a curious mixture of the roast-beef of Old England style, with an attempt at imaginative impulse and intensity of meaning, depending chiefly for high personifications and abstract qualities upon the use of capital letters. Moreover, there was a tragedy of "Cromwell" which was suppressed. "The public was not worthy of it,"—we heard this intimated. But there were some few intellects alive who were; and they could not obtain it. Besides, the public has many good things of which it is not worthy, as a mass; and yet, here and there, the right sort of man always picks up the right sort of book to his thinking.

That there are great elements of popular success, and a mastery of the worldly side of it, in Sir Lytton Bulwer, is undoubted; nor would it in the least surprise us if he became a peer of the realm, sometime within the next ten years; nevertheless there are several other things which he cannot accomplish.

The known dramatic works of Sir Edward Bulwer consist of "The Duchess de la Vallière," "The Lady of Lyons," "Richelieu," "The Sea Captain,"

and "Money," all brought out on the stage by Mr. Macready. The first was deservedly a failure. Of the others, one only retains a share of popularity, but its share is a large one. "The Lady of Lyons" is a decided favourite with the public. It is usual to place its author among the first of modern dramatists, which he decidedly is *not*, as well as among the first of our novelists, which he assuredly *is*, of whatever period.

The charm of the "Lady of Lyons" results from the interest of the plot, the clear and often pathetic working of the story, the easy flow of the dialogue, the worldly morality, and the reality of the action, just sufficiently clothed in an atmosphere of poetry to take it out of the mere prose of existence, without calling upon the imagination for any effort to comprehend it. All this, united with every advantage that scenic effect and excellent acting could give, established the "Lady of Lyons" in a popularity which it has always retained. But this alone is not the mede of a great dramatist. The plot of the play in question will not bear examination by any high standard. A heart is treacherously won; then, when after the cruel conflict with its own just indignation, it is ready to forgive all and continue true to its love, it is deserted with cruelty as great as the former treachery, all because a self-loving notion of "honour" demands the sacrifice.

The old false preference of the shadow for the substance! Then, at last, when honour is satisfied all is right. It is made right by the lover having been to battle, and "fought away" and obtained rank and property. In the last scene he literally purchases the lady—the price passing before her very face. This is fostering our worst faults; exciting sympathy for the errors that are among the most prolific sources of "the weariness, the fever, and the fret" of our life.

"Money" had a better purpose, was more clever and witty, and was superior in its structure; but while the power of money, and all its undue influence in the world, was excellently displayed, the ostensible and popular moral tendency of the play was to encourage the acquisition as a legitimate and honourable means for attaining objects of all kinds,—a triumph of the purse over every thought and feeling. The author shows his contempt for this condition of the world; but only meets it upon its own ground, instead of taking a higher. It was very successful at first, but is now seldom acted. "Richelieu" had also a "run" on its first appearance; but has never since been represented.

The character of Sir Edward Bulwer's mind is analytical, rather than impulsive; elaborate and circuitous, rather than concentrating and direct; fanciful rather than imaginative; refining and finishing,

rather than simple and powerful; animated and vivid, rather than passionate and fiery. He constructs upon system, rather than upon sensation; and works by his model, and with little help from instinct. His strongest faith is in the head, not in the heart; and for these reasons he is not a great dramatist. Nor can all the labour and skill in the world make him one. But he is philosophical and artistical, and is pretty sure to display both intellect and skill in whatever he undertakes.

Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton is a great novelist; his name will rank among the masters in the art, and his works will live together with theirs. It is sufficient to mention the names of such compositions as "Paul Clifford," "Eugene Aram," "Night and Morning," "Ernest Maltravers,"—with its sequel of "Alice"—and "Zanoni," to feel fearless in making this assertion. The variety and originality displayed in these fine works;—the invention; the practical knowledge, and clever working of character; the fine art in the management of the plot; the elegance of the style; the power over the feelings in deep pathos;—all these qualities combine to place their author in the highest rank of this department of literature.

In calling to mind the list of Bulwer's novels, those we have mentioned occurred first as masterpieces, but others remain behind to which other

tastes may give the preference. "Pelham has never been a favourite with us, notwithstanding its decided superiority to its contemporary "fashionable novels." We cannot relish philosophy or abstract speculation (and we grant these in "Pelham") from the same mouth which discusses the fopperies of the toilette, and how to make a pair of trousers! "A fine gentleman" is not to our taste, and there is quite enough worldly morality in the actual world without putting it down in a book, as a good thing worth repeating. "The last Days of Pompeii," wove into a story of deep interest and beauty, the memories of the classic times; and the character of Nydia, the blind girl, will ever hold a sweet place in the memory. "Rienzi" is, perhaps, less marked by genius than any of its author's later works of fiction, except the "Last of the Barons."

Among those first enumerated, "Eugene Aram" is distinguished for the development of a great and subtle truth. In the dreadful crime into which the benevolent and gifted scholar is betrayed at the very moment when he is full of ardour for knowledge and virtue, small cavillers are apt to ask, could a benevolent or virtuous nature act thus?—how can it be natural? We consider that the revelations of genius here displayed may fairly be said to have recorded a consciousness that in the moral as well as the physical frame, "we are fearfully

and wonderfully made;" that when the instincts and the passions are over-mastered by the intellect, and man rests proudly on his boasted reason alone, he may work strange deeds before "high Heaven;" that he must beware of the casuistries of his brain no less than the wild workings of his heart, and that the affections and passions are the grand purifiers, the master movers, the voice of God in the soul, regulating the speculative, daring reason, and controlling as well as impelling action. This is to write greatly; to write philosophy and history, the physiology of sensation, and aggregate and individual truth.

In "Ernest Maltravers" is pourtrayed the training of genius to the business of life; a hard task, and accomplished in a truly philosophical spirit. But as examples of excellence in his art, as well as of variety in its manifestation, we would especially dwell on "Paul Clifford," "Night and Morning," and "Zanoni."

"Paul Clifford" is of the same class as the "Beggars' Opera," and worthy to rank with it. While its hero is a highwayman, and the lowest characters are introduced in it, who have an appropriate dialect, there is nothing in it that could for a moment shock any one of real delicacy, and, there is a tinge of the ideal wrought into the very texture of most of these men which renders them interesting to the imagination, as their good feeling and *bon-*

hommie, with the total absence of anything brutal or gross, reconciles them to the mind, and obtains a hold upon the sympathies. But besides being individualized, as well as the representatives of classes, several of them are also latent satires upon certain known men of our time. Some of these are admirable, but more especially Old Bags, Fighting Attie, and Peter Macgrawler. Long Ned and Augustus Tomlinson are exquisite. One of the finest scenes—that of the trial, where the judge is the father of the criminal, is taken from Mrs. Inchbald. With this exception, the work in its various parts, and as a whole, is a fine original. The author does not make his hero admired for any one bad quality, but for naturally high qualities independent of the worst circumstances. It is a skilful work of art, and its moral tendency is noble, healthy, and full of exhortations to the manful struggle after good.

The character of Philip Beaufort in "Night and Morning," is a fine conception, and as finely pourtrayed from the moment that he is first shown a proud and pampered boy, imperious in his strength and beauty, onwards through the bitter trials of his "night," till by the energy of his will, always kept up to the mark by the intensity of his affections, he works his own way to clear "morning." His boyhood and youth are carried forward on a swelling tide of passion, which is sustained to the close of the

work, and leaves the mind elevated by its contemplation. There is great variety of character in the book: the rapid sketch of the father of Philip, and the exquisitely finished portrait of the mother, most pathetic in the dignity of her grief; the spoilt, gentle, selfish, idolized brother for whom the proud Philip works like a menial to be rewarded by ingratitude; the worldly uncle in high life, and the respectable uncle in the shopocracy; all are excellently drawn, but the interest is centred in the principal character. The story is equally well managed. The plot is complicated, yet clearly worked out; the incidents flow much less from outward circumstance than from the strong passions and proud will of the hero, by which he casts away over and over again the aid that would have saved him, rushes into danger and disaster, but at length works out his own regeneration, chastened and purified. The interest never flags; and those who can get through these three volumes with dry eyes, must be made of hard materials.

"Zanoni" is the most harmonious as a work of art, the most imaginative, and the purest and highest in moral purpose of any of the works of Bulwer. A certain peculiarity of style has laid it open to the charge of imitation, and many of the ideas and sentiments gathered from Plato, from Schiller, Richter, and Goëthe, have induced superficial readers to term

it a compilation. Sir Edward Bulwer is of opinion that it is quite fair to take anything from an older author—if you can improve it. This opens a most dangerous door to human vanity, as it would excuse any one to himself, for taking anything. Our author must not therefore be surprised if this notion has occasionally laid him open to vexatious remarks from half-seeing censurers. Notwithstanding any of its obligations, "Zanoni" is a truly original work; a finished design; embodying a great principle and pervaded by one leading idea. In the fable of "Zanoni" is depicted the triumph of the sympathetic over the selfish nature; both these terms being understood in their largest sense. Under the selfish, being comprised the pleasures of the intellect, the clear light of science, the love of the beautiful, the worship of art; — under the sympathetic, love in its most devoted and spiritual meaning, love losing the sense of self, stronger than life and death, rendering sacrifice easy, hallowing sorrow, endowing the soul with courage and faith. In order to bring out the principle in the strongest manner some supernatural machinery is employed, and the hero is supposed to possess the knowledge of ages and the secret of immortality. Love is also represented as the means by which the mind grasps the beneficent order and harmony of the Universe, in which Death is not an exception, but an integral part when viewed

in connection with Eternity. This truth may be attained also by pure reason, but the philosophical author has chosen to ascribe it to the intuitive teaching of pure passion. In like manner, Tennyson, in his fine poem of "Love and Death," makes Love "pierce and cleave" the gloom in his address to Death ;—

> "Thou art the shadow of life, and as the tree
> Stands in the sun and shadows all beneath,
> So in the light of great eternity
> Life eminent creates the shade of death ;
> The shadow passeth when the tree shall fall,
> But I shall reign for ever over all."

In the course of the story there are many valuable secondary suggestions and ideas. The new creation which opens to the eyes of those who are awakened to the grandeur and mystery of things, and seek a higher life and knowledge, is beautifully shadowed forth in the floating forms of light that seem to fill the air when the young aspirant, Glyndon, first inhales the elixir of life ; while the dread of "the world," that common world which has always followed with its persecution and its scorn the best and the noblest, the strikers out of new paths, the pioneers and heralds of progression, this nameless dread is embodied with singular power in the "Dweller of the Threshold." There is more still implied in this haunter of "first steps." Every new birth is ushered in with a pang—every new idea enlarges the capacity

for pain as well as for pleasure, and who ever felt the inspiration of a new and great feeling without trembling? The following passage contains the imagery to which we have alluded;—

"And now he distinctly saw shapes somewhat resembling in outline those of the human form, gliding slowly and with regular evolutions through the cloud. As they moved in majestic order, he heard a low sound—which each caught and echoed from the other; a low sound, but musical, which seemed the chant of some unspeakably tranquil joy. Slowly they glided round and aloft, till, in the same majestic order, one after one, they floated through the casement and were lost in the moonlight; then as his eyes followed them, the casement became darkened with some object indistinguishable at the first gaze, but which sufficed mysteriously to change into ineffable horror the delight he had before experienced. By degrees this object shaped itself to his sight. It was as that of a human head, covered with a dark veil, through which glared with livid and demoniac fire, eyes that froze the marrow in his bones."

This is fearfully beautiful painting. Many could bear witness to the truthfulness of its suggestions. Cowardly fear and distrust give the triumph to this phantom; courage and faith alone can conquer it; courage to brave danger or disgrace; faith in the truth, love of the beauty and the good to which the mind aspires. In the narrative, the author has represented the presence of this loathsome thing as a necessary part of the ordeal which the neophyte must go through; a presence only to be banished by those who can firmly confront its terrible eyes. It vanishes always before a steady gaze. The whole of the

supernatural machinery of the story is, in like manner, founded on profound truths connected with the mysteries of our being. The fabled events represent, or are types of, the links of association, the sympathies and antipathies, the instincts, smothered or left undeveloped in common life by the nature of our education, pursuits and habits, but not the less elemental principles of nature.

The character of Viola, the woman through whom Love asserts his pre-eminence—his "reign eternal over all" is exquisitely drawn in the first portion of the story. Her life as an actress, with the pathetic history of the musician Pisani, her father, are especially beautiful. The charm of the ideal is thrown over everything connected with her, and her purity, childlike and spotless, combined with her impassioned devotion to Zanoni, the hero, render the picture perfect. Out of this lovely character, however, arises the grand fault of the work, as an ethical harmony. It is the compromise of her passion for Zanoni by her maternal instinct over-mastering it. When she becomes a mother, she deserts her husband for the sake of her child. This is a heresy against a pure and exalted love. It is too true that it happens very commonly in real life, but not with such a woman, and such a love. It was necessary to the course of the story to remove her from her great protector, yet some other means should have been in-

vented. Deep nature is sacrificed to an immediate requisition of the narrative. The mistake is cleverly effected by the aid of superstition. But superstition could never have been so strong as her love—because, as we have said before, a great and ennobling passion is the voice of God in the soul, and banishes all weak fears. The exalted faith of Zanoni, and the heart-broken intensity of affection in Viola under the separation, are finely done; and the re-union is still finer. They meet again in a dungeon in Paris in the Reign of Terror. Viola is condemned to die, and Zanoni relinquishes his "charmed life," his immortality of youth, to save her. He leaves her asleep when his guards call him to execution. She is unconscious of the terrible sacrifice, but awaking and missing him, a vision of the procession to the guillotine comes upon her; Zanoni radiant in his youth and beauty is there;—

"On to the Barrière du Trône! It frowns dark in the air—the giant instrument of murder! One after one to the glaive;— another, and another, and another! Mercy! O mercy! Is the bridge between the sun and the shades so brief?— brief as a sigh? There —there—his turn has come. 'Die not yet; leave me not behind! Hear me—hear me!' shrieked the inspired sleeper. 'What! and thou smilest still!' They smiled — those pale lips — and with the smile, the place of doom, the headsman, the horror vanished! With that smile, all space seem suffused in eternal sunshine. Up from the earth he rose — he hovered over her—a thing not of matter — an idea of joy and light! Behind, Heaven opened, deep after deep; and the Hosts of Beauty were seen rank upon rank, afar; and 'Welcome,' in

a myriad melodies broke from your choral multitude, ye People of the Skies—' Welcome ! O purified by sacrifice, and immortal only through the grave—this it is to die.' And radiant amidst the radiant, the image stretched forth its arms, and murmured to the sleeper, "Companion of Eternity !—this it is to die !' * * * *

"They burst into a cell, forgotten since the previous morning. They found there a young female, sitting upon her wretched bed; her arms crossed upon her bosom, her face raised upward; the eyes unclosed, and a smile of more than serenity,—of bliss upon her lips. Never had they seen life so beautiful; and as they crept nearer, and with noiseless feet, they saw that the lips breathed not, that the repose was of marble, that the beauty and the ecstasy were of death."

We have quoted this beautiful passage because it ought to remain on record, singled out as an example of pure and exalted conception. To those who knew it before, it will be renewed pleasure; to those who did not, an inducement to become acquainted with the work from which it is selected.

It is strange that in a composition which embodies so much high philosophy, the author should have taken so puerile a view of the French Revolution. He dwells only on its horrors,—a theme long since exhausted. True, they were many and great;—but slaughterous battles for legitimacy, and long ages of despotism, and inquisitions, and Sicilian massacres, and massacres of Saint Bartholomew, have had their horrors too.* Sir Edward laments over "the throne

* "Let them add to this the fact that *seventy-two thousand persons suffered death by the hands of the executioner* during the reign of Henry the Eighth, and judge between," &c.—MACAULAY'S ESSAYS, vol. i. p. 250.

and the altar!" Words of high and very ancient sound; but what besides words were they at that period. In a note to a passage in his Zanoni, he says "Take away murder from the French Revolution, and it becomes the greatest farce ever played before the angels!" The greatest farce!—was the decrepitude and fall of the altar, then, a farce after all—the decrepitude and fall of the throne a farce, after all—the brutalized vices of the nobles, their despotism and all-but extinction as a nobility—were these things only a great farce? Rather say, the greatest and most frightful retribution, the most abused principle, the greatest expiatory sacrifice, the most comprehensive tragedy—any of these are nearer the mark, historically, morally, philosophically, and as matter of human feeling.

It is from passages such as this, strangely at variance with the philosophical spirit which is unquestionably manifested in the writings of this author, that he gives an impression of shallowness, and also of insincerity and affectation. Whatever be the cause, it is certain that he lays himself open to these charges. Far from coinciding in the accusation of shallowness, it is yet fair to say that he can seldom lay claim to the distinction of an original or profound thinker, or a discoverer of truth; but it is much to be capable of perceiving and appreciating truth when dug up and displayed by others, and this Bulwer does; he

does more, he is able to assimilate it, and make it in some respects his own, by giving it new forms and colours, all in harmony with itself. His affectations, we take to proceed, partly, from the fact that his mind does not always keep up to the high mark it attains when imbued with the philosophy it is capable of comprehending, but does actually disport itself in certain fripperies and follies; and, partly, from the necessity he is under of displaying no more truth to the world than the world can bear with complacency.

An honest-minded reviewer of the works of Sir Edward Bulwer has said of him, "his soul is not brave enough for truth." This is scarcely correct: he is brave enough to face any truth, but his policy holds check upon his soul. He knows what a strong bull-headed thing the world is, and he loves popularity too well to risk having it trampled down by hoofs. He never, therefore, goes too far beyond his age; but he keeps up with it always. Hence he maintains his popularity, and perhaps when his intellect feels the necessity of reining in, it turns a little restive and indulges in some curvets at the expense of the "gentle readers" he feels obliged to humour. It is further to be admitted that he is essentially aristocratic in his tastes and feelings; that in his writings there is no true sympathy with humanity until it is refined and polished. Grant this, however, and he is a great writer. The true delineation of rough nature

must not be expected of him. The unpolished diamond he would recognise, and turn coldly from it: nature, with him, requires to be perfected—by art. He is prone to idealise all his characters. With few exceptions they are the reverse of real or substantial. Not that we would have them real, but with rather a larger portion of reality. His walk, however, is the least of all frequented in this age, and he pursues it, in general, worthily.

If Sir Edward Bulwer had not already established a higher reputation, he might have fairly laid claim to distinction as an historian from his well-studied, classical, and elegant work entitled "Athens, its Rise and Fall;" in which he has occupied the truer and more extensive field over which history ought to extend, instead of confining himself to the mere chronicle of political events, and the vicissitudes of war. The progress of the arts and literature of Athens, comprising some fine criticism on its drama, are distinguishing features of the two volumes already published, and its philosophy, social manners and customs are promised in the two which are to complete the work.

The "Last of the Barons" ought to have been published in the form of history, entitled "Chronicles of the Great Earl of Warwick," or something equivalent: it would have been valuable to all interested in such matters. Read as a romance, it is

intolerably tedious and heavy, and its authenticity and elaborate research are thrown away;—for, the question "Is it all true?" must continually occur, just as children are apt to interrupt the thread of a story with that inquiry. Doubtless, historical novels are among the most popular we have, as, for instance, those of Sir Walter Scott, and "Rienzi," by Bulwer himself; but, in them, the fiction predominates, in the "Last of the Barons," it is the reverse.

Sir E. Bulwer is, in private, a very different and superior man to the character indicated by the portraits of him. That by Chalon, conveys no idea of his fine intellect, but presents a mawkish sentimentality and personal affectation; whereas Sir Edward is very frank, easy, careless (sometimes, perhaps, studiously so) good-natured, pleasant, conversible, and without one tint of those lack-a-daisy qualities conferred upon him by the artists. If his sitting had its "weak moment," the artist ought not to have copied it, but to have taken the best of the truth of the whole man.

Now, it *may* be the fact, that nothing would convey so complete a conviction to the mind of Sir Edward of his own genius and general talents, and so perfect a sensation of inward satisfaction and happiness, as to be seated at a table—say in the character of an Ambassador—with his fingers covered with dazzling rings, and his feet delightfully pinched in a pair of looking-glass boots with Mother-Shipton heels, while

he held a conversation with two diplomatic foreigners of distinction, from different courts, each in his own language; took up the thread of an argument with a philosopher on his right; put in every now and then a capital repartee to the last remark of a wit at his left elbow, while at every moment's pause he continued three letters lying before him—one to the Minister of State for the Home Department, one to a friend (inclosing a postscript for his tailor), and one on love, containing some exquisite jokes in French and Italian on the Platonic Republic — and all those conversations, and arguments, and repartees, and writings, continuing at the same time—each being fed from the same fount with enough to last till the turn came round. And finally, that he should discover the drift of one diplomatist, talk over the other to his views, confute the philosopher, silence the court wit, convey the most important information to the English Premier, give his friend all the advice he asked, and something far more subtle besides, (together with the clearest directions and fractional measurements in the postscript,) and that the love-letter should not only answer every possible purpose of kindliness, delight, amusement and admiration, but should, by a turn of the wrist, be easily convertible into an exquisite chapter for a future novel.

But where is the great mischief of any private fancies of this kind, which moreover have some founda-

tion in an undoubted versatility and general accomplishments? Even in the matter of external daintiness, a great deal too much fuss is made about it, and many ill-natured remarks vented, as if no other eminent man had a private hobby. If the private hobbies of the majority of our leading minds, and well-known men of genius, were displayed, the eyes of the Public would open to the largest circle, and its mouth become pantomimic. One great author has a fancy for conjuring tricks, which he performs "in a small circle," to admiration; another would play at battledore and shuttle-cock, till he dropped; another or two (say a dozen) prefer a *ballet* to any other work of art; one likes to be a tavern-king, and to be placed in "the chair;" another prefers to sit on a wooden bench round the fire of a hedge alehouse, and keep all the smock-frocks in a roar; two or three are amateur mesmerists, and practise "the passes" with prodigious satisfaction; one poet likes to walk in a high wind and a pelting rain, without his hat, and repeating his verses aloud; another smokes during half the day, and perhaps half the night, with his feet upon the fender and puffing the cloud up the chimney; another sits rolled up in a bear's-skin, and as soon as he has got "the idea," he rushes out to write it down; another has a fancy for playing all sorts of musical instruments, and could not be left alone in a room with organ, bag-pipe, or

bassoon, but in a few minutes a symphony would begin to vibrate through the wall;—and if so much is thought of an over-attention to a man's bodily outside, what should be said of those who—as one would fill a tub—pour or cram into the bodily *inside* so much that is not harmless, but injures health, and with it injures the powers of the mind, and the moral feelings, besides shortening the duration of life. We should look into ourselves, and be tolerant.

Notwithstanding the popularity of Sir Edward Bulwer, we hardly think he has been sufficiently appreciated as a great novelist by the majority, even of those critics who admire his works; while the hostile attacks and depreciations have been very numerous and unceasing. Of his philosophy we would say in brief that we believe the world is hardly in the main so bad as he considers it, and certainly with many more exceptions than he seems to admit; and that he himself is a much better man than he knows of, and only wants more faith in genuine and sincere nature to be himself the possessor of a share as large as his faith.

W. H. AINSWORTH.

"Madame Tussaud describes * * * * as a fine handsome-looking man, with a florid complexion, and a military air. He had presided over some of the massacres in the provinces."

MADAME TUSSAUD'S *Memoirs.*

"—— And rides there, on its Clothes-horse; as on a Pegasus might some skyey messenger," &c.

Sartor Resartus. Chap. vi. *Old Clothes.*

"With regard to the personal descriptions of the different characters introduced throughout the work, it may be confidently asserted, that they are likely to be more accurate than those generally given by other authors."

MADAME TUSSAUD, *Preface.*

WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH.

From the historical novel and romance, as re-originated, in modern times, by Madame de Genlis and Sir Walter Scott, and adopted with such high success by Sir Bulwer Lytton, and with such extensive popularity by Mr. James, there has of late years sprung up a sort of lower or less historical romance, in which the chief part of the history consisted in old dates, old names, old houses, and old clothes. But dates in themselves are but numerals, names only sounds, houses and streets mere things to be copied from prints and records; and any one may do the same with regard to old coats, and hats, wigs, waistcoats, and boots. Now, we know that "all flesh is grass," but grass is not flesh, for all that; nor is it of any use to show us hay for humanity.

To throw the soul back into the vitality of the past, to make the imagination dwell with its scenes and walk hand in hand with knowledge; to live with its most eminent men and women, and enter

into their feelings and thoughts as well as their abodes, and be sensitive with them of the striking events and ruling influences of the time; to do all this, and to give it a vivid form in words, so as to bring it before the eye, and project it into the sympathies of the modern world, this is to write the truest history no less than the finest historical fiction; this is to be a great historical romancist—something very different from a reviver of old clothes.

Such are the extremes of this class; and if there be very few who in execution approach the higher standard, so there are perhaps none who do not display some merits which redeem them from the charge of a mere raking and furbishing up of by-gone materials. But as there is a great incursion of these un-historical un-romantic romances into the literature of the present day, and fresh adventurers marshalling their powers of plunder on the borders, it may be of some service that we have drawn a strong line of demarcation, displaying the extreme distinctions, and leaving the application to the general judgment.

With regard to the Newgate narrative of "Jack Sheppard" and the extraordinarily extensive notoriety it obtained for the writer, upon the residuum of which he founded his popularity, so much just severity has already been administered from criticism and from the opinion of the intellectual portion of the public, and its position has been so fully settled, that we are glad to pass it over without farther animadversion.

The present popularity of Mr. Ainsworth could not have risen out of its own materials. His so-called historical romance of "Windsor Castle" is not to be regarded as a work of literature open to serious criticism. It is a picture book, and full of very pretty pictures. Also full of catalogues of numberless suits of clothes. Such a passion, indeed, has he for describing clothes, that he frequently gives us two suits with a single body, one being concealed under the other. It would be difficult to open it any where without the eye falling on such words as cloth of gold, silver tissue, green jerkin, white plumes.

Looking for examples, here is the first introduction of the Heroine.

"In this litter sat Anne Boleyn. She wore a surcoat of white tissue, and a mantle of the same material lined with ermine. Her gown, which, however, was now *concealed by the surcoat*, was of cloth of gold tissue, raised with pearls of silver damask, with a stomacher of purple gold similarly raised, and large open sleeves lined with chequered tissue. Around her neck she wore a chain of orient pearls, from which depended a diamond cross. A black velvet cap richly embroidered," &c. &c.—*Windsor Castle*, p. 21.

It is said that she had a strong tendency to coquetry, and "how severely she suffered for it, it is the purpose of this history to relate." Her first action is thus described :—

"At this moment, Anne's eyes were fixed with some tenderness on one of the supporters of her canopy on the right,—a very handsome young man attired in a doublet and hose of *black tylsent, paned and cut*, &c."

Here are several Characters :—

"Though scarcely eighteen, the Duke of Richmond looked more than twenty, and his lips and chin were *clothed*, with a well-grown though closely-clipped beard. He was magnificently habited in a doublet of cloth of gold of *bawdekin*, the *placard* and sleeves of which were wrought with flat gold, and fastened with aiglets. A girdle of crimson velvet, enriched with precious stones, encircled his waist, and sustained a poniard, and a Toledo sword, damascened with gold. *Over all* he wore a loose robe, or *housse*, of scarlet mohair, trimmed with *minever*, and was further decorated with the collar of the Order of the Garter. His cap was of white velvet, ornamented with emeralds, and from the side depended a small azure plume. He rode a magnificent black charger, trapped in housings of cloth of gold, powdered with ermine.

"By the Duke's side rode the Earl of Surrey, attired as upon the previous day, and mounted on a fiery Arabian, trapped in crimson velvet, fringed with Venetian gold. Both noblemen were attended by their esquires in their liveries."—*Ibid*, p. 24.

Behind these carefully developed characters "came a chariot covered with cloth of silver," containing two beautiful damsels, one of whom attracted the greatest attention :—

"Her gown was of white satin worked with gold, and had long open, pendent sleeves; while from her slender and marble neck hung a cordelière—a species of necklace imitated from the cord worn by Franciscan friars, and formed of crimson silk twisted with threads of Venetian gold. * * Her companion was the Lady Mary Howard, &c. * * Lady Mary was dressed in blue velvet, cut and lined with cloth of gold, and wore a head gear," &c.—*Ibid.* p. 25.

Sometimes the features of a face are well portrayed, but the ruling passion rapidly asserts its prerogative. Of the first character introduced, it is said that "his countenance was full of thought and intelligence," but six lines further down we arrive at more important information :—

"His dress was rich but sombre, consisting of a doublet of black satin, worked with threads of Venetian gold; hose of the same material, and similarly embroidered; a shirt curiously wrought with black silk, and fastened at the collar with black enamelled clasps; a cloak of black velvet, *passmented* with gold, and lined with crimson satin; a flat black velvet cap, set with pearls and goldsmith's work, and adorned with a short white plume; and black velvet buskins. His arms were rapier and dagger, both having gilt and graven handles, and sheaths of black velvet."—*Windsor Castle*, p. 2—3.

The book is also full of processions, banquets, royal hunting parties, courtiers, lords, and jesters, who are indeed "very dull fools." It has, moreover, a demon ghost in the form of Herne the Hunter, who according to this legend, led King Henry VIII. and all his court the life of a dog. As to plot or story it does not pretend to any.

"Old St. Paul's, a tale of the Plague and the Fire," is a diluted imitation of some parts of De Foe's "Plague in London," varied with libertine adventures of Lord Rochester and his associates. It is generally dull, except when it is revolting. There are descriptions of nurses who poison or smother their patients, wretched prisoners roasted alive in their cells, and one felon who thrusts his arms through the red-hot bars,—"literally" is added, by way of apology.

A critic recently remarked of Mr. Ainsworth's "St. James's, or the Court of Queen Anne," that the delineations of character in it were mere portraits, and nothing more. "The business in which

they are engaged has no vitality for any but themselves—it is dull, *passé* in every sense of the word, and they leave not a single incident or memento of romance or poetry behind them by which to identify them in our hearts, &c. * * * * It is one thing to write an historical romance; another, to write a romantic history; and a third to write a history without *any* romance." We might quote many similar opinions.

It has become very plain, that brief as this paper is, the natural termination of it can no longer be delayed. The truth must be told. This paper is a joint-production. No sooner were the first two paragraphs seen, than the article was taken out of the writer's hands in order to prevent a severity which seemed advancing with alarming strides. But the continuation by another hand appearing to be very little better, recourse was had to quotations from the author's works, introduced by a third hand; and finally, as it was feared by the hint at "similar opinions" that further critical references were intended, it was unanimously agreed that nothing more should be done in that way, except to coincide with the remarks often made concerning the good-tempered portraits of a man who is usually spared in public, because so much esteemed and regarded in private.

MRS. SHELLEY

"Out of the depths of Nature—
Substance, shades, or dreams,
Thou shalt call up—sift—and take
What seems fitting best to make
A Structure, fraught with direful gleams,
Or one all filled with sunny beams."

"Oh you, who sentried stand upon the temple wall;
Holy, and nearer to the glory's golden fall,
Moon-like, possess and shed at large its rays!"

CORNELIUS MATHEWS.

"———— For though
Not to be pierced by the dull eye whose beam
Is spent on outward shapes, there is a way
To make a search into its hidden'st passage."

SHIRLEY.

MRS. SHELLEY.

THE imaginative romance as distinguished from the historical romance, and the actual or social life fiction, is of very rare occurrence in the literature of the present day. Whether the cause lies with the writers or the public, or the character of events and influences now operating on society, certain it is that the imaginative romance is almost extinct among us.

We had outgrown the curdling horrors and breathless apprehensions of Mrs. Ratcliffe, and the roseate pomps of Miss Jane Porter. But why have we no Frankensteins, for that fine work is in advance of the age?

Perhaps we ought to seek the cause of the scarcity in the difficulty of the production. A mere fruitless, purposeless excitement of the imagination will not do *now*. The imaginative romance is required to be a sort of epic—a power to advance—a something to pro-

pel the frame of things. Such is Bulwer's "Zanoni," a profound and beautiful work of fiction, which has been reviewed in its place, and in which Godwin's "St. Leon" found a worthy successor. With this single exception, the first place among the romances of our day belongs to the "Frankenstein" of Mrs. Shelley.

The solitary student with whom the longing desire to pry into the secrets of nature, ends in the discovery of the vital principle itself, and the means of communicating it, thus describes the consummation of his toils. We quote the passage as illustrative of the genius by which the extravagance of the conception is rendered subservient to artistical effect:—

"It was on a dreary night of November, that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.

"How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful!—Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white

sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion, and straight black lips."

Frankenstein, vol. i. p. 97, 98.

The Monster in "Frankenstein," sublime in his ugliness, his simplicity, his passions, his wrongs and his strength, physical and mental, embodies in the wild narrative more than one distinct and important moral theory or proposition. In himself he is the type of a class deeply and cruelly aggrieved by nature—the Deformed or hideous in figure or countenance, whose sympathies and passions are as strong as their bodily deformity renders themselves repulsive. An amount of human woe, great beyond reckoning, have such experienced. When the Monster pleads his cause against cruel man, and when he finally disappears on his raft on the icy sea to raise his own funeral pile, he pleads the cause of all that class who have so strong a claim on the help and sympathy of the world, yet find little else but disgust or at best, neglect.

The Monster created by Frankenstein is also an illustration of the embodied consequences of our actions. As he, when formed and endowed with life became to his imaginary creator an everlasting, ever-present curse, so may one single action, nay a word, or it may be a thought, thrown upon the tide of time become to its originator a curse, never to be recovered, never to be shaken off.

"Frankenstein" suggests yet another analogy. It teaches the tragic results of attainment when an impetuous irresistible passion hurries on the soul to its doom. Such tragic results are the sacrificial fires out of which humanity rises purified. They constitute one form of the great ministry of Pain. The conception of "Frankenstein" is the converse of that of the delightful German fiction of Peter Schlemil, in which the *loss* of his shadow (reputation or honour) leads on the hero through several griefs and troubles to the great simplicity of nature and truth; while in "Frankenstein" the *attainment* of a gigantic reality leads through crime and desolation to the same goal, but it is only reached in the moment of death.

In "Pantika, or Traditions of the most Ancient Times," by William Howitt, there is much imaginative power, and great invention. These tales abound in lofty thoughts, and the descriptions are both beautiful and grand. The "Exile of Heaven" is, perhaps, the finest of the series both in design and execution. There is sublimity in the rapid view of creation as witnessed by the Angel, and in the picture of Cain, and in that of Satan. There is also gorgeous and glowing painting in the description of the voluptuous city of Lilith the Queen of Beauty, whom the Angel in his presumption had created to be more perfect than Eve, and through whom he

had lost Heaven and brought evil on earth. The contrast between this imaginative creation and that of Frankenstein is curious. The punishment here comes through beauty, instead of deformity. Lilith is made too beautiful; it is impossible to sympathise with the Angel's hatred of her, or to believe she was evil. This is the fault of the story. The attempt to make her exquisitely beautiful, yet not an object of any sympathy, is unsuccessful. The fact is, "friend Howitt" has got into a very ticklish position. We venture to submit that the loveliness of his misleading fair one ought to have been made to fade gradually before the view, as the merely external always does in its influence upon the senses. This would, at least, have shown an individual triumph over her; but as the story stands she is triumphant (as at present the sensual beauty is in the world), with every prospect of continuing so, according to the sequel of this gorgeous fable.

There is a high purpose in the Angel's final humility, his submission to the existence of evil, and to the impossibility of obliterating the consequences of action. The teachings which lead to this are finely managed;—as when, in his wanderings through space, he sees a dim planet covered with water, suddenly become convulsed and tossed in hideous commotion, and while he murmurs at the ruin he expects to witness, beholds a fair world

emerge from these fiery and terrific throes; the mountains have risen, the waters are confined to their appointed bed, the dry land is ready to become clothed with verdure, and a great and beneficent work has been done.

Most of the other tales are built too much on the fierce and exclusive spirit of the ancient Jewish people. They consequently breathe a vindictive, blood-thirsty tone. The horrible punishment of the Starving Man who kills and eats the Scape-goat, and then finds himself possessed by all the crimes of mankind; the wretched case of the poor Soothsayer cursed by the Hebrew Prophet, and detained in bed for a whole year by a congregation of all the Idols in his room (standing round his bed) who will not suffer him to move, and keep in his life by feeding him on oil-cake, till he almost turns into a mummy, and at last sees the Idols begin to crumble round him, and reptiles crawling about among the ruins; these are fine and striking inventions, worthy of an eastern imagination, and only assume a repulsive appearance because the Infinite Power of the universe is represented as causing them. If Allah or Buddha had done this, we should have felt nothing of the kind.

Had the author of the "Manuscripts of Erdely" possessed clearness of conception and arrangement of his subject in the same degree as he is gifted with imagination, invention, and fine power of developing

character and describing both action and scenery, his work would have been entitled to one of the highest places in romance. But Mr. Stephens has destroyed the effect of his work by the prodigality of his incidents and personages, and by the confusion of his method of dealing with them. There is matter for four different plots, with a hero and heroine to each, in his one romance. He gives evidence of a learned research and historical knowledge; we find also a puzzling array of names, not unlike that which is to be found in Robert Browning's "Sordello." There are, besides, too many quotations, and the fault is the less pardonable in a writer of such great original power.

We have said that there is a fine power of description in this author. In attempting an illustration, we are puzzled where to choose, so many present themselves. The following beautiful and poetical passage must suffice. A man pure in character but maligned on earth has appealed to the spirit of his dead wife for sympathy:—

"Spirit of the departed! do you know that I am innocent?

"He raised his eyes, and a curdling thrill crept through his veins! for, lo! the prayer, that, almost silently, had welled up from the sanctuary of his soul, had reached its aim, *and had an answer*. The far depths of the room became gradually brightened with a glory, not of this world; and a dim, thin, human shape, slowly developed its indistinct and shadowy outline, by insensibly divesting itself, as it

were, of one immortal shroud after another, till it stood, pale and confessed, in ethereal repose."

Manuscripts of Erdely, vol. i. p. 307.

Mrs. Shelley's romance entitled "Valperga," is of high merit. She exhibits in her hero, a brave and successful warrior, arriving at the height of his ambition, endowed with uncommon beauty and strength, and with many good qualities, yet causes him to excite emotions of reprobation and pity, because he is cruel and a tyrant, and because in the truth of things he is unhappy. This is doing a good work, taking the false glory from the eyes and showing things as they are. There are two female characters of wonderful power and beauty. The heroine is a lovely and noble creation. Perhaps Mrs. Shelley's "Falkner" ranks next in power to "Frankenstein." The chief character, in especial, is worked out with subtle truth and force; and the same may be said, though with different degrees and modes of working, of all the personages of the story. Mrs. Shelley's plots are always of deep interest. These works, taken as wholes, if below "Frankenstein" in genius, are yet worthy of their author and of her high rank in the aristocracy of genius, as the daughter of Godwin and Mary Wolstonecraft, and the widow of Shelley.

ROBERT MONTGOMERY.

" Parnassus is transformed to Zion Hill,
And Jewry-palms her steep ascents do fill.
Now good St. Peter weeps pure Helicon,
And both the Maries make a music-moan;—
Yea, and the prophet of the heavenly lyre,
Great Solomon, sings in the English quire,
And is become a new-found Sonnetist!"

BISHOP HALL. *Satire* 8.

Mr. P.—" My friend!—(*patting his shoulder*)—this is not a bell. (*Patting the tin bell.*) It is a very fine Organ!"

Drama of Punch.

ROBERT MONTGOMERY.

HUMOUR may be divided into three classes; the broad, the quiet, and the covert. Broad humour is extravagant, voluble, obtrusive, full of rich farce and loud laughter:—quiet humour is retiring, suggestive, exciting to the imagination, few of words, and its pictures grave in tone:—covert humour, (which also comprises quiet humour,) is allegorical, typical, and of cloven tongue—its double sense frequently delighting to present the reverse side of its real meaning, to smile when most serious, to look grave when most facetiously disposed. Of this latter class are the comic poems of the ingenious Robert Montgo mery, a humourist whose fine original vein has never been rightly appreciated by his contemporaries. He has been scoffed at by the profane for writing unmeaning nonsense, when that very nonsense had the most disinterested and excellent moral aim; he has

passed for a quack, when he nobly made his muse a martyr; he has been laughed at, when he should have been admired; he has been gravely admired when his secret laughter should have found response in every inside. He has been extensively purchased; but he has not been understood.

In these stirring times when theologies are looking up, and the ribald tongues of fifty thousand sectarian pulpits wag wrathfully around the head of the Established Maternity; while she herself is suffering intestine pains from dangerous wars, and the pure spirit of Religion is wandering and waiting in the distant fields; it behoves all those thrifty shepherds who are still disposed to multiply the goods of this world, and take up the burdens and vain pomps which others, being less strong, may, peradventure, find too onerous,—it behoves such shepherds, we repeat, to look keenly through and beneath all these struggles and backslidings, and to watch over the movements of wealthy congregations.

It is not to be denied that with the vigorous elements which distinguish the spirit of the present age, are mingled many weaknesses and short-comings; that winding about its truthfulness there are many falsehoods and hypocrisies; that the battle for the right is but too frequently mixed up and confused with the battle for the wrong; and that amidst so much that is high-minded and sincere, there is per-

haps still more that is selfish and cunning, that is, in fact, not genuine but humbugeous.

"The London Charivari," to which allusion has previously been made in Vol. I. page 280, comprises the three classes of humour described at the opening of this paper, and may also be said to have a wit and humour peculiar to itself. The application of these faculties, always liable to exert a powerful influence for good or evil, has been from the very first commencement of that periodical, devoted to the cause of justice, of good feeling, and of truth. The most "striking" characteristic of this "Punch" is his hatred and ridicule of all grave-faced pretences and charlatanery. Considering his very unscrupulous nature, it is remarkable how little there is of actual private personality in him. If he strikes at a man domestically, which is very rare, it is by no means on account of his quiet "hearth-stone," but of his public humbugeosity. Never before were so many witty, humorous, and choice-spirited individuals amicably associated together for anything like so long a period; and never before did so many perfectly free-spoken wits and humourists indulge their fancies and make their attacks with so good-natured a spirit, and without one spark of wanton mischief and malignity. It is a marked sign of good in the present age.

In this same light, and to these same moral aims,—

though with a characteristic difference such as marks all original genius—do we regard the public character and works of the much-admired yet equally maligned Robert Montgomery. At some future time, and when his high purpose can no longer be injured by a discovery of its inner wheels and movements, springs and fine escapements—at such a period he may perhaps vouchsafe a *key* to all his great works; meantime, however, in his defence, because we are unable to bear any longer the spectacle of so total a misconception of a man's virtues and talents in the public mind, we will offer a few elucidatory comments upon two of his larger productions.

The poem of "Satan" is evidently the work of a great free-thinker. Far be it from us to use this much-abused and perverted expression in any but its true sense, with regard to Mr. Robert Montgomery. Freely he thinks of all spiritual and mundane things; in fact, his freedom amounts to a singular degree of familiarity with those Essences and Subjects concerning which nearly all other people entertain too much awe, and doubt of themselves, to venture upon anything like proximity or circumambience. But though the thinking faculty of Mr. Robert Montgomery makes thus free, it is only within the bounds of the "Establishment," as defined in his Preface, though not necessarily governed in all other respects,—to use his own inimitable words,—by "the sternness of ada-

mantine orthodoxy."* In support of the spiritual part of his treatment of his subject, and referring to the free-thinking of his hero (who is not only the Prince of Air, but the London Perambulator, as proved by this poem) Mr. Montgomery quotes the following from a high authority:—"Thus the Devil has undoubtedly a great degree of speculative knowledge in divinity; having been as it were, educated in the best divinity school in the universe," &c. He also quotes from the same author (Jonathan Edwards) that "it is evident he (the Devil) has a great speculative knowledge of the nature of experimental religion." These preliminary statements of the more enlarged view we should take of the Satanic mind, and its many unsuspected acquirements, together with much more which we cannot venture to quote, will be found in the Preface to the fourth edition of this accomplished Prince.

Having stated the spiritual or "experimental" drift; we have only now to point to the worldly activity or practical application, and we shall at once find a key to this sublimely humorous design, and its high moral purpose. This application we shall find in the covert parody of the "Devil's Walk" (the one which has been ascribed jointly to Porson and to Southey, and which we believe to belong to neither, but to Coleridge) which for the force and piquancy of

* Preface to the Fifth Edition of "Satan," p. 2.

its satire has rarely been surpassed. Accordingly, Mr. Robert Montgomery considers the hero of his poem, as a real, personal, and highly intellectual agent, walking about London—he distinctly alludes to London—so that, to follow out this poet's excursion, we might meet Satan on 'Change, hear his voice on Waterloo Bridge, see him taking a jelly in the saloon of Drury Lane theatre, or seated demurely in a pew at Church, with a psalter stuck on his off-horn. Mr. Montgomery intimates and suggests all these sort of things,—nay, he directly describes many of the circumstances. For instance, Satan goes to the play. To what part of the house is not said. His natural locality would of course be the pit, and, for this very reason, he would probably prefer the one shilling gallery; but as Mr. Montgomery clearly explains that his hero went there on business—to collect materials for this very poem, which is written as a diabolico-theological and philosophical soliloquy—it is to be presumed that he was in the boxes. He thus describes a few of his observations, and personal sensations.

> "Music and Pomp their mingling spirit shed
> Around me; beauties in their cloud-like robes
> Shine forth,—a scenic paradise, it glares
> Intoxication through the reeling sense
> Of flush'd enjoyment."
>
> *Satan*, Book V.

The comparison of a theatrical scene with a scene

in paradise, and made by one who had actually been in both places, would be more bold than reverent, in any other writer; nor are we by any means sure that Satan or his poet could show the slightest foundation for it. But we bow to their joint authority. He next describes the different classes of the audience. Some wish to mount upon Shakspere's wings, and "win a flash" of his thought; but the second, he says, are "a sensual tribe;"—

> "Convened to hear romantic harlots sing,
> On forms to banquet a lascivious gaze,
> While the bright perfidy of wanton eyes
> Through brain and spirit darts delicious fire!"
>
> *Ibid.*

Well may this stern "spirit" feel it delicious, after the very different kind of flame to which he has been elsewhere accustomed. This is to write philosophy and history, moral satire and autobiography, all under one highly humorous head.

The main object of the poem of "Satan," however ingeniously it may be covered up, is to work out the deep satire of the old proverb of the "Devil quoting Scripture;" in fact, he very ably defends in his Prefaces, the propriety of displaying Satan as a great preaching LL.D. in private, or a D.D. hypocrite in public. Let any one read his Prefaces — they *must* see his fine aim. Hence, we shall discover in this sublime poem a succession of well-glossed blows

and thrusts at all those clerical teachers who are not guided and governed in their duties and efforts by "the sternness of adamantine orthodoxy." It will, to any close observer, be perceived that the work throughout, shows no quarter to Dissent or Tergiversation; nor to any of the proud visions of Newfangledness, which have of late exalted their dark antlers above the horns of the average humility.

> "Upon the *forehead* of these fearless times
> I know the haughtiness that now exults:
> But let the modern in his pride, beware!"
>
> *Satan*, b. iv.

Equally, in melodious cornopæan strains does he breathe forth a wail over cornucopian pluralities. Here are his own soft yet reproachful, sweet yet terrible words — no German flute was ever more tenderly searching, nor, when based on an ophecleide accompaniment, more confounding.

> "Partaken mercies are forgotten things.
> But Expectation hath a grateful heart
> Hailing the smile of promise from afar:
> Enjoyment dies into ingratitude," &c.
>
> *Ibid.*

And presently afterwards in speaking of "haughty-featured England," he compares certain proud authorities, to—

> "A hell-born feeling such as I would nurse.
> * * *
> Of Mammon, that vile despot of the soul.
> The happy meekness of contented minds
> Is fretted with ambition," &c.
>
> *Ibid*, b. iv.

Ahem! Really this is a very sad state of things. Amidst all this fine comic writing who can fail to see the sadness of the subtle truth that lurks beneath the assumed gravity. The hero of the poem playing the nurse to a juvenile compatriot (in the first line of the preceding quotation) is an equally dark and "palpable" hit at the very dangerous teachings of various branches of Dissent, and sections of the Church itself; while the "happy meekness" of those "contented minds" which are "fretted with ambition" quietly and quaintly slips in a reflection that must have caused the sounding-board of many a pulpit to tremble with the vibratory effluence of the Conscience beneath. Moreover, as Satan *warms* with his theme, he becomes yet more direct in his attack, though we are not quite sure at what denomination of the unorthodox he levels his fork,—

> "Some gracious, grand, and most accomplished few,
> Each with a little kingdom in his brain,
> Who club together to re-cast the world,
> And love so many that they care for none," &c.
>
> *Ibid*, b. vi.

Such is the main-spring of the covered movement "capped and jewelled," which is discoverable in the great poem of "Satan." That there are many branch-movements and inferior wheels playing upon the complex circle of general lay society, is equally apparent, even as was done in its prototype (the "Devil's Walk,") but we cannot give space to their

examination. A few insulated passages, illustrative of poetical excellencies, of the opinion secretly entertained by the poet of himself, and of the character of the accomplished Prince, are all that can be attempted. Of the latter he finely says,—

> "His nature was a whirlpool of desires,
> And mighty passions, perilously mixed,
> That with the darkness of the demon world
> Had something of the light of Heaven."
>
> *Ibid*, b. ii.

With what graceful ingenuity does the poet seem to say so much in the first line just quoted, and yet say nothing; because it is clear that desires, in a whirlpool of themselves, could not exist as any one definite desire. The line, therefore, is a terrific nothing. What follows, no doubt furnished Milton with the idea of *his* Satan, whose form had not yet lost all its "original brightness; nor appeared less than archangel ruined." It is hence very evident that Milton, by the inspiration of his genius, foresaw what Robert Montgomery would say, and wisely availed himself of the poetic revelation. Montgomery's "Satan" is, nevertheless, disposed to be complimentary to Milton, who, he says, is,—

> "Flaming with visions of eternal glare!"
>
> *Ibid*, b. v.

The compliment has rather a professional look; but it should be remembered from whose mouth this

proceeds. The same great master of light and shade also favours us with the following portrait:—

> " Then mark the hypocrite of pious mould,
> For ever putting on unearthly moods,
> And looking lectures with his awful eyes, &c.
> * * *
> Or sternly paints some portraiture of sin,
> But feels himself the model whence he drew."
>
> *Ibid,* b. iii.

We are upon dangerous ground, we know; but it is ever thus in dealing with great humourists. One never scarcely knows where to have them. He proceeds in this strain:—

> " Meanwhile, I flatter the surpassing fool,
> * * *
> Too mean for virtue, too polite for vice."
>
> *Ibid,* b. iii.

This Prince is becoming personal, and we must therefore conclude with one more flash of his pen at those who, impelled " by frenzied glory," will venture on " till dashed to ruin;" and he then makes an apostrophe to the " Review of Departed Days " of poetry,—

> " By whom, as beacon-light for time unborn,
> The past might well have risen,—hast forgot
> The law of retribution in thy love
> Of fame, and adoration to the dead.—
> A war awakes!—*what poetry is here*" &c.
>
> *Ibid,* b. iv.

All that remains, therefore, with reference to the

Princely Preacher's prolonged soliloquy, is to give one specimen of the "poetry," as abstract art, of his—we had almost said—Serene Highness, so very amiable does he appear in these pages:—

> "So may it ever be! let ages gone,—
> Whence monuments, by sad experience piled,
> Might o'er unheedful days a warning frown,—
> Like buried lumber, in oblivion sleep;
> Experience is the sternest foe of hell."
>
> *Ibid*, b. iv.

How novel a face does even the commonest proverb wear, when rouged and rabbit-pawed by genius! The last line admirably conveys the intimation of what "a burnt child" both dreads and hates; or, perhaps, it would rather infer that those who are burnt most become the most implacably hot. Our last quotation must be in illustration of the fine "keeping" which exists in this poem as a work of art. Other poems seek to rise to a climax, now and then, and usually towards the close; but this very properly descends, and thoroughly illustrates "the art of sinking in poetry" described by Dean Swift. Let us observe how, step by step, from primitive elements to chaos, thence to the Satanic solitude, thence to a chorus of thunder-clouds, thence to an earthly commotion, thence (like the last revival of a dying candle) to nature's reel of anguish, and thence —to a small geographic familiarity.

> "I love this passion of the Elements,

This mimicry of chaos, in their might
Of storm!—And here, in my lone awfulness,
While every cloud a thunder-hymn repeats,
Earth throbs, and nature in convulsion reels,
Farewell to England!"

Ibid, b. vi.

This is a truly unique specimen of the bathetic, and does his Unserene Profundity the most abysmal degree of credit.*

Impressed with the deepest admiration of his sublimity, and covert humour, we pass onwards, bowing, through his other works, and beneath their walls and towers of many editions, until we bow ourselves into the presence of Mr. Robert Montgomery's rapturous Vision of "Woman." His subject is both human and divine; but it has moreover a secret and occult purpose of the most magnanimous kind.

Ostensibly this poem entitled "Woman" is a versified flattery, extending through upwards of three thousand three hundred lines, and it also abounds with sentiments of gallantry and of chivalry, which in these dull days of matter-of-fact courtship is really quite refreshing to meet with. One specimen will suffice:—

"Next Chivalry, heroic child,
With brow erect, and features mild,

* It must of course be apparent that the present article deals exclusively with the *poetical* character of Mr. Robert Montgomery; and carefully avoids touching upon, or even alluding to, his more important avocations. With his reputation for eloquence and ability in the latter, there has been no interference.

Placed Love upon his matchless throne,
For gallantry to guard alone.
Then, woman! in that reign of heart,
How peerless was thy magic part!

* * *

And shall we, in a venal age,
When love hath grown more coldly sage,
With frigid laugh and frown decry
The bright return of Chivalry?—
The trumpet-music of the past,
In tales of glory doom'd to last,—
No longer must one echo stir
The pulse of English character?

Woman, canto ii.

But while the exoteric adulations of the fair, and semblances of a yearning to restore the romance of ancient days of chivalry, with his suggestions for a new order of Church Militant, might lead one to confer upon his gallant Reverence the title of the Spiritual Quixote, there lurks beneath all this an esoteric design yet more magnanimous, and of still greater purity of self-devotion. Compared with this "the tales of glory doom'd to last" (let us observe his covert contempt of such glory in the expression of *doom'd*) will be regarded as the mere toys and gilded brutalities of a rude age: nor shall we pay further attention to those bright external attractions of the fair, which, as this poet says, by their "ray of *undiscern'd* control,"—

"Advanced above life's daily sphere,
Disclosed her radiance, full and near;
And kindled for beclouded man
The light that only woman can."

Woman, c. ii.

The very bad grammar by which the last couplet is beclouded, (and which indeed is so marked a feature in this, and other poems of the same inspired penman) will do much to prove that Mr. Robert Montgomery always has ulterior designs far above and beyond all the materiality of mere philological expression, and that his muse is not amenable to any of its known laws and requisitions.

The secret purpose, then, which is concealed with so much subtle humour, like a bright serpent, beneath all the superincumbent rubbish-couplets of this wonderful work of "Woman" is nothing less than an attempt to bring about a thorough reformation in Art, by means of a thorough purification of the public taste in poetry. This reformation and this purification he seeks to accomplish by the converse of the usually received notions as to the required process. Observing that to give the public the most pure and refined poetical productions does not answer the desired end, because they are not read, or, when read, are only appreciated by the few, the high-soaring, disinterested, and original mind of Robert Montgomery has alighted upon the idea of opening the eyes of the public by a master-stroke of genius; *viz.*

by giving it a production which it would read, and of a kind which should display the strongest possible contrast to all genuine poetry, so that the public should suddenly exclaim, "What is this darkness?—and where is the light?—what intensely atrocious trash do we read?—and where is the most unlike thing to this; for our souls are confounded and athirst!"

Accordingly, with a magnanimity only to be classified with that of the devout martyrs, and of the Roman heroes who devoted themselves for the good of their country, this great Virtue has devoted itself—not to an honourable fate, but, more than that, to the utmost disgrace for the good of his literature! Knowing well what he was about, and fully prepared for all the odium and contempt that such a proceeding must reasonably be expected to entail, he launched upon the public, in this long poem of "Woman," a cargo of such unquestionable nonsense, such common-place vapidities of adulation, such high pretensions of imbecility, such ungrammatical flourishes and touches of the bathetic, and such a prolonged droning sing-song, uninspired even by the abortive life of one vigorous absurdity,—a production, in fine, which must be pronounced, in its parts, and as a whole, to be without parallel throughout the entire range of modern literature.

But the result has been quite as wonderful as the poem. Mr. Montgomery must console his

bosom by the proud consciousness of having meant to act a noble part. With much regret we have to record the total failure of his esoteric scheme. We have described what he intended, and we have honestly, and pretty fully, expressed our opinion of how he carried out his design in the poem of "Woman." But it was misunderstood. For the public (or at least an immense number of readers) not perceiving his drift, and not feeling the force of contrast, as the strategical martyr had intended, actually received the thing in sober earnest—as a poem! Its elaborate stupidity and matchless nonsense were all thrown away! The effort to exhaust with a mixture of folly and emptiness, was defeated. The labour to disgust had been in vain—and Robert Montgomery, with a richly bound, illuminated copy of "Woman" under his arm, was admitted into the public Temple of the Muses, and again crowned as 'a Poet!'

But not alone did the greatly humorous, though defeated Strategist enter this public Temple. Behind him came a crowd shouting his praises, and around him was a crowd, shouting in praise of his poetry; and in front of him was a crowd who bore placards, showing that his poems had gone through more than four or five editions for every one edition of the works of such fellows as Wordsworth, or Coleridge, or Tennyson. But among this latter crowd there also

appeared Mr. Punch! This well-known personage had a very large mirror under his short cloak. Courteously pointing his toe, as he approached the sacred Penman, he eloquently expressed his admiration of the man, who, after waving his white cambric handkerchief from a rostrum till the tears ran in rivulets all round, should yet have discovered another equally successful trick of oratory under circumstances where it was impossible to display the ring upon his little finger. Mr. Punch then coughed slightly—gave his mirror a rounding polish with the corner of his cloak, and addressing the crowds as the Public, he turned the mirror towards them, and politely requested to be informed what peculiar impression upon their thoughts they derived from the intelligent object they contemplated therein?

Most faithfully Yours
T. Carlyle

THOMAS CARLYLE.

"Always there stood before him, night and day,
Of wayward vary-colored circumstance
The imperishable presences serene,
Colossal, without form, or sense, or sound;
Dim shadows but unwaning presences
Four-facéd to four corners of the sky:
And yet again, three shadows, fronting one,
One forward, one respectant, three but one;
And yet again, again and evermore,
For the two first were not, but only seemed,
One shadow in the midst of a great light,
One reflex from eternity on time,
One mighty countenance of perfect calm,
Awful with most invariable eyes."

TENNYSON. *The Mystic.*

"Beware when the great God lets loose a thinker on this planet. Then all things are at risk. There is not a piece of science, but its flank may be turned to-morrow; there is not any literary reputation, nor the so-called eternal names of fame, that may not be revised and condemned. * * * * * He claps wings to the sides of all the solid old lumber of the world."

EMERSON. *Essay on Circles.*

THOMAS CARLYLE.

ACCORDING to the view of the *microcosmus,* what is said of the world itself, may be said of every individual in it; and what is said of the individual, may be predicated of the world. Now, the individual mind has been compared to a prisoner in a dark room, or in a room which would be dark but for the windows of the same, meaning the senses, in a figure; nothing being in the mind without the mediation of the senses, as Locke held,—"except," as Leibnitz acutely added in modification, "the mind itself." Thus is it with the individual, and thus with the general humanity. Were it not for the Something from without, and the Something within, which are both Revelations, we should sit on the floor of our dark dungeon, between its close stifling walls, gnawing vainly with the teeth of the mind, at the chains we wear. But conclusions which genius has leapt successfully, and science proved, have come to aid us. It is well to talk of the progress of the public mind. The

public mind,—that is, the average intelligence of the many,—never does make progress, except by imbibing great principles from great men, which, after long and frequent reiteration, become part of the moral sense of a people. The educators are the true and only movers. Progress implies the most active of energies, such as genius is, such as science is; and general progress implies, and indeed essentially consists of, individual progresses, men of genius working as the life-springs and moving powers. A Ulysses must pass with the first goat,—call him Nobody, or by his right name. And to return to our first figure,—what the senses are to the individual mind, men of genius are to the general mind. Scantily assigned by Providence for necessary ends, one original thinker strikes a window out here, and another there; wielding the mallet sharply, and leaving it to others to fashion grooves and frames, and complete advantage into convenience.

That Mr. Carlyle is one of the men of genius thus referred to, and that he has knocked out his window from the blind wall of his century, we may add without any fear of contradiction. We may say, too, that it is a window to the east; and that some men complain of a certain bleakness in the wind which enters at it, when they should rather congratulate themselves and him on the aspect of the new sun beheld through it, the orient hope of which he has

so discovered to their eyes. And let us take occasion to observe here, and to bear in memory through every subsequent remark we may be called upon to make, that it has not been his object to discover to us any specific prospect—not the mountain to the right, nor the oak-wood to the left, nor the river which runs down between,—but the SUN, which renders all these visible.

When "the most thinking people" had, at the sound of all sorts of steam-engines, sufficiently worshipped that idol of utilitarianism which Jeremy Bentham, the king, had set up, and which many a great transcendentalist, who never read a page of Bentham's works, has loftily resolved to narrow to his own misconceptions of this philosopher,—the voice of a prophet was heard praying three times a day, with magnanimous reiteration, towards Jerusalem,—towards old Jerusalem, be it observed; and also towards the place of sun-rising for ultimate generations. And the voice spoke a strange language,—nearly as strange as Bentham's own, and as susceptible of translation into English. Not English by any means, the critics said it spoke; nor even German, nor Greek; although partaking considerably more of the two last than of English; but more of Saxon than either, we humbly beg to add. Yet if the grammarians and public teachers could not measure it out to pass as classic English, after

the measure of Swift or Addison, or even of Bacon and Milton,—if new words sprang gauntly in it from savage derivatives, and rushed together in outlandish combinations,—if the collocation was distortion, wandering wildly up and down,—if the comments were everywhere in a heap, like the "pots and pans" of Bassano,—classic or not, English or not,—it was certainly a true language,—a language "*μερόπων ἀνθρώπων*;" the significant articulation of a living soul: God's breath was in the vowels of it. And the clashing of these harsh compounds at last drew the bees into assembly, each murmuring his honey-dream. And the hearers who stood longest to listen, became sensible of a still, grave music issuing like smoke from the clefts of the rock. If it was not "style" and "classicism," it was something better; it was soul-language. There was a divinity at the shaping of these rough-hewn periods.

We dwell the longer upon the construction of Mr. Carlyle's sentences, because of him it is pre-eminently true, that the speech is the man. All powerful writers will leave, more or less, the pressure of their individuality on the medium of their communication with the public. Even the idiomatic writers, who trust their thoughts to a customary or conventional phraseology, and thus attain to a recognized level perfection in the medium, at the expense of being less instantly incisive and expressive (accord-

ing to an obvious social analogy) have each an individual aspect. But the individuality of this writer is strongly pronounced. It is graven—like the Queen's arrow on the poker and tongs of her national prisons—upon the meanest word of his utterance. He uses no moulds in his modelling, as you may see by the impression of his thumb-nail upon the clay. He throws his truth with so much vehemence, that the print of the palm of his hand is left on it. Let no man scoff at the language of Carlyle—for if it forms part of his idiosyncracy, his idiosyncracy forms part of his truth;—and let no man say that we recommend Carlylisms—for it is obvious, from our very argument, that, in the mouth of an imitator, they would unlearn their uses, and be conventional as Addison, or a mere chaos of capitals, and compounds, and *broken* language.

We have named Carlyle in connection with Bentham, and we believe that you will find in "your philosophy," no better antithesis for one, than is the other. There is as much resemblance between them as is necessary for antithetic unlikeness. Each headed a great movement among thinking men; and each made a language for himself to speak with; and neither of them originated what they taught. Bentham's work was done by systematizing; Carlyle's, by reviving and reiterating. And as from the beginning of the world, the two great principles of

matter and spirit have combated,—whether in man's personality, between the flesh and the soul; or in his speculative life, between the practical and the ideal; or in his form of mental expression, between science and poetry,—Bentham and Carlyle assumed to lead the double van on opposite sides. Bentham gave an impulse to the material energies of his age, of the stuff of which he was himself made,—while Carlyle threw himself before the crushing chariots, not in sacrifice, but deprecation; "Go aside—*there is a spirit even in the wheels!*" In brief, and to take up that classification of virtues made by Proclus and the later Platonists, — Bentham headed such as were πολιτικαί, Carlyle exalts that which is τελεστική, venerant and religious virtue.

Every reader may not be acquainted, as every thinker should, with the Essays of R. W. Emerson, of Concord, Massachussetts. He is a follower of Mr. Carlyle, and in the true spirit; that is, no imitator, but a worker out of his own thoughts. To one of the English editions of this volume, Mr. Carlyle has written a short Preface, in which the following gaunt and ghastly, grotesque and graphic passage occurs; and which, moreover, is characteristic and to our immediate point.

"In a word, while so many Benthamisms, Socialisms, Fourrierisms, *professing* to have no soul, go staggering and lowing like monstrous moon-calves, the product of a heavy-laden moon-struck age;

and in this same baleful 'twelfth hour of the night' even galvanic Puseyisms, as we say, are visible, and dancings of the sheeted dead, —shall not any voice of a living man be welcome to us, even because it is alive."

That the disciples of Bentham should be accused of professing to have no soul, because they say the mental and moral constitution is based on the physical, and grows out of it, and those of Robert Owen and Fourrier should be accused of professing to have no soul, because their main object has been to ameliorate the bodily condition of mankind; or that an indifference to poetry and the fine arts, except as light amusements, to be taken alternately with gymnastics and foot-ball, should be construed into a denial of the existence of such things, we do not consider fair dealing. True, they all think of first providing for the body; and looking around at the enormous amount of human suffering from physical causes, it is no great wonder that they chiefly devote their efforts to that amelioration. A man who is starving is not in a fit state for poetry, nor even for prayer. Neither is a man fit for prayer, who is diseased, or ragged, or unclean — except the *one* prayer for that very amelioration which the abused philosophers of the body seek to obtain for him. With respect, however, to the disciples of Bentham, Owen, and Fourrier, it is no wonder that he should be at utter variance. No great amount of love "is lost between them." Not that Carlyle reads or knows much

of their systems; and not that they read or know anything of his writings. In these natural antipathies all philosophers are in an equal state of unreasonableness. Or shall we rather call it wisdom, to follow the strong instincts of nature, without any prevaricating reasonings upon the in-felt fact. Carlyle could make little good out of their systems, if he read them; and they could make nothing at all of his writings. The opposite parties might force themselves to meet gravely, with hard lines of the efforts of understanding in their faces, and all manner of professions of dispassionate investigation and mutual love of truth—and they would clash foreheads at the first step, and part in fury! "The Body is the first thing to be helped!" cry the Benthamites, Owenites, Fourrierites, — loudly echoed by Lord Ellenborough and the Bishop of London—"Get more Soul!" cries Carlyle, "and help yourselves!"

But the wants of the body will win the day—the movements of the present age show that plainly. The immortal soul can well afford to wait till its case is repaired. The death-groans of humanity must first be humanely silenced. More Soul, do we crave for the world? The world has long had a sphere-full of unused Soul in it, before Christ, and since. If Plato and Socrates, and Michael Angelo and Raphael, and Shakspere and Milton, and Handel and Haydn, and all the great poets, philosophers, and music-

magicians, that have left their Souls among us, have still rendered us no protection against starvation, or the disease and damage of the senses and brain by reason of want of food, in GOD's name let us now think a little of the Body—the mortal case and medium of his Image. What should we think of a philosopher who went to one of our manufacturing towns where the operatives work from sixteen to eighteen hours a-day, and are nevertheless badly clothed, dirty, and without sufficient food,—and to whom the philosopher, as a remedial measure, suggested that they should get more soul? Many at this hour are slowly, or rapidly, dying from want. Can we tell them to think of their souls? No—give the fire some more fuel, and *then* expect more light, and the warmth of an aspiring flame. That these two extremes of body and soul philosophy, may, as Emerson declares, involve one and the same principle, viz., the welfare and progress of mankind, may be true; but at present the poor principle is "between two stools"—or between the horns of a dilemma not inaptly represented by Mr. Carlyle's misapplied figure of the staggering moon-calf.

We have observed that Carlyle is not an originator; and although he is a man of genius and original mind, and although he has knocked out his window in the wall of his century—and we know it,—we must repeat that, in a strict sense, he is not an

originator. Perhaps our figure of the window might have been more correctly stated as the re-opening of an old window, long bricked up or encrusted over,—and probably this man of a strong mallet, and sufficient right hand, thought the recovery of the old window, a better and more glorious achievement, than the making of many new windows. His office certainly is not to "exchange new lamps for old ones." His quality of a "gold-reviver" is the nearest to a novel acquirement. He tells us what we knew, but had forgotten, or refused to remember; and his reiterations startle and astonish us like informations. We "have souls," he tells us. Who doubted it in the nineteenth century; yet who thought of it in the roar of the steam-engine? He tells us that work is every man's duty. Who doubted *that* among the factory-masters?—or among the charity-children, when spelling from the catechism of the national church, that they will "do their duty in the state of life to which it shall please God to call them?" Yet how deep and like a new sound, do the words "soul," "work," "duty," strike down upon the flashing anvils of the age, till the whole age vibrates! And again he tells us, "Have faith." Why, did we not know that we must have "faith?" Is there a religious teacher in the land who does not repeat from God's revelation, year by year, day by day—Have faith? or is there a

quack in the land who does not call to his assistance the energy of "faith?" And again—"Truth is a good thing." Is *that* new? Is it not written in the theories of the moralist, and of the child?—yes, and in the moral code of Parliament men, and other honourable gentlemen, side by side with bribery and corruption, and the "melancholy necessity" of the duellist's pistol and twelve paces? Yet we thrill at the words, as if some new thunder of divine instruction ruffled the starry air,—as if an angel's foot sounded down it, step by step, coming with a message.

Thus it is obvious that Mr. Carlyle is not an originator, but a renewer, although his medium is highly original; and it remains to us to recognise that he is none the less important teacher on that account, and that there was none the less necessity for his teaching. "The great fire-heart," as he calls it, of human nature may burn too long without stirring; burn inwardly, cake outwardly, and sink deeply into its own ashes: and, to emancipate the flame clearly and brightly, it is necessary to stir it up strongly from the lowest bar. To do this, by whatever form of creation and illustration, is the aim and end of all poetry of a high order,—this,—to resume human nature from its beginning, and return to first principles of thought and first elements of feeling; this,—to dissolve from eye and ear the film of habit and

convention, and open a free passage for beauty and truth, to gush in upon unencrusted perceptive faculties: for poetry like religion should make a man a child again in purity and unadulterated perceptivity.

No poet yearns more earnestly to make the inner life shine out, than does Carlyle. No poet regrets more sorrowfully, with a look across the crowded and crushing intellects of the world,—that the dust rising up from men's energies, should have blinded them to the brightness of their instincts,—and that understanding (according to the German view) should take precedence of a yet more spiritualized faculty. He is reproached with not being practical. "Mr. Carlyle," they say, "is not practical." But he is practical for many intents of the inner life, and teaches well the Doing of Being. *Be* something good, and you are sure to *do* something good. "What would he make of us?" say the complainers. "He reproaches us with the necessities of the age, he taunts us with the very progress of time, his requirements are so impossible that they make us despair of the republic." And this is true. If we were to give him a sceptre, and cry, "Rule over us," nothing could exceed the dumb, motionless, confounded figure he would stand: his first words, on recovering himself, would be, "Ye have souls! work—believe." He would not know what else to think, or say for us, and not at all what to

do with us. He would pluck, absently, at the sceptre, for the wool of the fillet to which his hands were accustomed; for he is no king, except in his own peculiar sense of a prophet and priest-king,—and a vague prophet, be it understood. His recurrence to first principles and elements of action, is in fact, so constant and passionate, that his attention is not free for the development of actions. The hand is the gnomon by which he judges of the soul; and little cares he for the hand otherwise than as a spirit-index. He will not wash your hands for you, be sure, however he may moralise on their blackness. Whether he writes history, or philosophy, or criticism, his perpetual appeal is to those common elements of humanity which it is his object to cast into relief and light. His work on the French Revolution is a great poem with this same object;—a return upon the life of humanity, and an eliciting of the pure material and initial element of life, out of the fire and torment of it. The work has fitly been called graphical and picturesque; but it is so *by force of being* philosophical and poetical. For instance, where the writer says that "Marat was in a cradle like the rest of us," it is no touch of rhetoric, though it may seem so, but a resumption of the philosophy of the whole work. Life suggests to him the cradle, the grave, and eternity, with scarce a step between. In that brief interval he sometimes exhorts that you should

work; and sometimes it would appear as if he exhorted you not to work at all, but to sit still and think. He is dazzled by the continual contemplation of a soul beating its tiny wings amidst the pale vapours of Infinity. Why, such a man (not speaking it irreverently) is not fit to live. He is only fit to be where his soul most aims at. He sinks our corporal condition, with all its wants, and says, "Be a man!" A dead-man with a promoted spirit seems our only chance in this philosophy.

Carlyle has a great power of re-production, and can bring back his man from the grave of years, not like a ghost, but with all his vital flesh as well as his thoughts about him. The reproduced man thinks, feels, and acts like himself at his most characteristic climax—and the next instant the Magician pitches him into Eternity, saying, "It all comes to that." But his power over the man, while he lasts, is entire, and the individual is almost always dealt with as in time-present. His scenes of by-gone years, are all acted now, before your eyes. By contrast Carlyle often displays truth; from the assimilations in the world, he wrings the product of the differences; and by that masterly method of individualising persons, which is remarkable in his historical writing, the reader sometimes attains what Carlyle himself seems to abhor, viz., a broad generalization of principles. His great forte and chief practice is individualization.

And when he casts his living heart into an old monk's diary, and, with the full warm gradual throbs of genius and power, throws out the cowled head into a glory; the reason is not, as some disquieted readers have hinted, that Mr. Carlyle regrets the cloistral ages and defunct superstitions, — the reason is not, that Mr. Carlyle is *too* poetical to be philosophical, but that he is *so* poetical as to be philosophical in essence when treating of things. The reason is, that Mr. Carlyle recognizes, in a manner that no mere historian ever does, but as the true poet always will do,—the same human nature through every cycle of individual and social existence. He is a poet also, by his insight into the activity of moral causes working through the intellectual agencies of the mind. He is also a poet in the mode. He conducts his argument with no philosophical arrangements and marshalling of "for and against;" his paragraphs come and go as they please. He proceeds, like a poet, rather by analogy and subtle association than by uses of logic. His illustrations not only illustrate, but bear a part in the reasoning;—the images standing out, like grand and beautiful caryatides, to sustain the heights of the argument. Of his language we have spoken. Somewhat too slow, broken up, and involved for eloquence, and too individual to be classical, it is yet the language of a gifted painter and poet, the colour of whose soul eats itself into the words. And magnifi-

cent are the splendours they display, even as the glooms. Equally apt are they for the sad liveries of pain and distress, and certainly for the rich motleys of the humorous grotesque. His pictures and conjurings-up of this latter kind—chiefly from his original faculty, and method of producing the thing alive and before you, but also by contrast with his usual thoughtful, ardent, and exacting style—are inexpressibly ludicrous. His Latin epitaph on Count Zähdarm, in "Sartor Resartus," and his account of the courtier whose lower habiliments were stuffed with bran, to look broad and fashionable, but who unfortunately sat down upon a nail, are exquisite. These things are often additionally ludicrous from his giving the actors a dry, historical shape, while the scene itself is utterly absurd and extravagant, but amidst which the narrator seldom appears to move a muscle of his face. It is by reason of this humorous dryness that we sometimes do not know if he would really have us laugh at the thing.

Moreover, it must be stated, that the Prophet of the Circle hath displayed a cloven tongue!—and peradventure the sincerity of his mode of expression in several works may at times have been questionable. The most orthodox dogmatists have often applauded his sayings about a Church, when it has been plain to the initiated readers of his books that he meant no such temple as that, but some untithed field, with a

soul in it. In like manner, in his remarks on tolerance in his "Hero-worship," he seems to guard himself strongly against imputations of latitudinarianism; whereby the highly orthodox commend him as very proper, and the latitudinarians laugh in their sleeves—he does it so well. It is the same in politics. Radicalism is scoffed at; and the next page lets loose a sweeping radical principle, involving perhaps no small destructiveness for its attainment. On the other side, Tories are gratified by his declarations of reverence for old things, though they may be placed, in order to be the better seen, upon the top of Vesuvius; and the more assimilative and shapely Conservative smiles to hear him speak aloud for the conservation of all things which are good and excellent. The book on "Past and Present," however, settles most of these doubts. It is all over with him among the high church party; and he laughs as he thinks. But have any of the other parties got him? Not so: he was born to be an independent Thinker; it is his true mission; it is the best thing he can do, and we have no doubt but it is just the thing he *will* do.

We think "Sartor Resartus" the finest of Mr. Carlyle's works in conception, and as a whole. In execution he is always great; and for graphic vigour and quantity of suggestive thought, matchless: but the idea, in this book, of uncovering the world—

taking off all the *clothes*—the cloaks and outsides—is admirable. His finest work, as matter of political philosophy, is undoubtedly his "Past and Present." In this work he is no longer the philosopher of the circle. He allows the world a chance.

The incentive to progression in the great family of mankind, is usually considered to be the desire for happiness, or the prospect of bettering our condition by struggling onward to a given point: but the necessity of progression, as well as the incentive, are perhaps equally attributable to another cause. It may be that Dissatisfaction is the great mover; and that this feeling is implanted as a restless agent to act for ever upon us, so as to urge us onward for ever in our ascending cycles of being. This we should conceive to be Mr. Carlyle's impression. He does not say so, we believe; nor perhaps does he decidedly think so; nevertheless we should say the Philosophy of Dissatisfaction formed a principal element in his many-sided unsystematic view of the struggles of mortality. ∴

The book entitled "Chartism" was a recognition of this principle of dissatisfaction, as manifested by the violent mental and physical forces of a number of enraged sufferers. But we pass through the book as through a journey of many ways and many objects, brilliantly illuminated and pictured in every direction, but without arriving at any clear conclusion, and

∴ In having no fixed system, Carlyle resembles Montaigne, Sir Thos Browne, Hazlitt and Emerson; but he has not the directness and consistency common to both of the two latter.

without gathering any fresh information on the main subject, during the progress. By his not very clear argument about "might" and "right," he has enabled any despot to show some sort of reasoning for any violent act.

His grand remedial proposals for all the evils of the country, by "Universal Education" and "*General* Emigration," are rather an evasion of Chartism and its causes; for the Chartists say, "We have enough education to see the injustice of people being starved in a land of plenty; and as for emigration, we do not choose to go. Go yourselves."

"Past and Present" evidences a perception of greater wants than these Education and Emigration plans.

"True, all turns on your Ready Reckoner being moderately correct,—being *not* insupportably incorrect! A Ready Reckoner which has led to distinct entries in your Ledger such as these:—'*Creditor*, an English people, by fifteen hundred years of good Labour; and *Debtor* to lodging in enchanted Poor-Law Bastilles: *Creditor* by conquering the largest Empire the Sun ever saw; and *Debtor* to Donothingism and "Impossible," written on all departments of the government thereof: *Creditor* by mountains of gold ingots earned; and *Debtor* to the Bread purchaseable by them:' *such* Ready-Reckoner, methinks, is beginning to be suspect; nay, is ceasing, and has ceased, to be suspect! Such Ready-Reckoner is a Solecism in Eastcheap; and must, whatever be the press of business, and will and shall be rectified a little! Business can go on no longer with *it*."—*Past and Present*, p. 220.

The "History of the French Revolution," is considered by most people to be Mr. Carlyle's greatest

work; not as a history, we presume, nor because it is in three volumes, but chiefly because it is thought to contain a more abundant and varied display of his powers than any of his other works. We can offer no remarks about it so good as those we shall extract from an article written by Joseph Mazzini,* which we consider to be one of the most profound, masterly, and earnest-minded critical essays that was ever written. We should also add, that it is full of that admiration and respect which are due to a writer of Mr. Carlyle's genius and character.

"By that Revolution the spirit of emancipation became incarnate in a people, and gave battle; and the battle was long, bloody, destructive, full of great and cruel things, of Titan-like phrenzies and achievements. * * * * Have extinct generations nothing more to yield us than an emotion of pity? * * * * The historian has a noble and great mission; but it is not by making us weep over all that falls; it is not by placing before us, fragment by fragment, detail by detail, the mere material fact, the succession of crises by which this world of the dead, with their immediate effects, have passed away;—above all, it is not by dragging forth, at every instant, from the midst of this collective and complex world, the single wretched and feeble individual, and setting him in presence of the profound 'mystery of time,' before 'unfathomable darkness,' to terrify him with the enigma of existence—it is not so that this mission can be fulfilled. * * * * Before our eyes, as before his, in the midst of a kind of phastasmagorial vortex, capable of giving the strongest head a dizziness, pass in speedy flight the defunct heroes of the poem. What are they going to do? We know not: the poet explains them not, but he laments over them all, whoever they may be. What have they done? Where are they

* Monthly Chronicle, No. XXIII., January, 1840.

going? We know not, but whatever they may have done, time has now devoured them, and onward they pass over the slippery gore one after another, rolling into night, the great night of Goethe, the bottomless and nameless abyss; and the voice of the poet is heard crying to the loiterers, 'Rest not—continue not—forward to thy doom!' When all are gone, when escaped, as from the nightmare, out of the midst of the turmoil, you look around to catch some trace of their passage, to see if they have left aught behind them that can furnish the solution of the enigma,—you have only a vacuum. Three words alone remain as the summary of their history—the Bastille—the Constitution—the Guillotine. The Constitution, the object of every effort, is placed between a prison and a scaffold. * * * * And is this all? There is another thing. Twenty-nine millions of beings rose not as one man, and the half of the population of Europe shook not at their appeal, for a word, a shadow, and empty formula. * * * * He has done no more than give us *tableaux*, wonderful in execution, but nothing in conception, without connection, without a bearing. His book is the French Revolution *illustrated*—illustrated by the hand of a master, we know, but one from whom we expected a different labour. * * * * The eternal *cursus et recursus* inexorably devours ideas, creeds, daring, and devotedness. The Infinite takes, to him, the form of Nihilation. It has a glance of pity for every act of enthusiasm, a smile, stamped with scepticism, for every act of great devotedness to ideas. Generalities are odious to it; detail is its favourite occupation, and it there amuses itself as if seeking to lay at rest its inconsolable cares."

We add the following, as being equally applicable to certain peculiarities in other works of Mr. Carlyle.

"He has lost the sentiment of human grandeur; he has found himself placed between the infinite and the individual, catching at every instant from this contrast, a kind of terror of the former, and of pity, nothing more than pity, for the latter. So, having no higher value to give to the idea, he has been driven, in order not to exhaust himself

at the very outset, to give so much the more to the impression: he becomes passive. Everything of a nature to strike vividly on the senses has been seized by him, and he has handed down the image to his readers. * * * *

"It is to Goethe, too much revered by Mr. Carlyle, that we owe this tinge of irony which in this book often supervenes * * those traits of mockery * * above all, that disposition to crush man by contrasting him with the Infinite. As if it were not precisely from the consciousness of this Infinite environing him, and that yet prevents him not from *acting*, that man is great;—as if the eternity that is before us, after us, and around us, were not also within us."

MAZZINI.*

This unfair method of dealing with humanity, this continual disposition to place man at a disadvantage of the most extreme kind, *viz.*, by comparison with space and time, and the miraculous round of things, constitutes a prominent feature in the philosophy of dissatisfaction. It is always sure of its blow, and its humiliating superiority; for who can stand before it? We might quote to Mr. Carlyle the words addressed to Mephistopheles—"Seems nothing ever right to you on earth?" One cannot imagine anything done by human hands which would be likely to give Mr. Carlyle much satisfaction. He would be pretty sure to say, at best, "Work on, and we shall see what else will come of it!" Or, more probably, to quote again from "Faust," he would remind us that "Man must err, till he has ceased to struggle."

* At the moment when Mazzini was in danger of falling into most unmerited odium, it was a noble and generous courage in Mr. Carlyle to come forward to his rescue, as he did in his recent letter to the "Times."

Hence he would have us sit quietly and be silent. He applauds inactivity and silence; but he also applauds work: he says man must work, and exhorts every one to do his utmost. These contradictions, however, have a central meaning, which we shall attempt to explain. The dissatisfaction, the unhopefulness, and the melancholy that pervade his works are attributable to the same causes.

For the practical dissatisfaction exhibited in Mr. Carlyle's works, we would offer the following elucidation. We think that he so continually negatives the value of work, denies the use and good of doing things, and smiles bitterly or laughs outright at human endeavour, because he considers that so long as the Competitive system—the much applauded "fair competition"—is the rule of social working life, instead of Co-operation, there can be made no actual step in advance to a better condition of things. So long as one class, whether in trade, politics, art, or literature, is always striving to oppose, pull back, counteract, or plunder the other, no permanent good can supervene. The greatest remedial measure which is sure to let in an overflowing stream of good, he laughs at,—because, after all the long labours of the contest for it, he sees in imagination a number of side-trenches cut to let it off before it reaches the assumed destination, or means taken to let it off after its arrival, by other channels. By

the terms "hero" and "heroic," he means true wisdom and moral strength; and the only hope he sees for this world, is that one man should rule over each country, eminent for his heroic worth, because chosen by a people who have at length become themselves not un-heroic, and therefore capable of knowing true greatness, and of choosing their greatest man.

So much for his practical and political dissatisfaction. For his contradictory tone concerning all work, as unavailing and yet a necessity, let him answer for himself:

"Thus, like a God-created, fire-breathing, spirit-host, we emerge from the Inane; haste stormfully across the astonished earth; then plunge again into the Inane. Earth's mountains are levelled, and her seas filled up, in our passage: can the earth, which is but dead and a vision, resist spirits which have reality and are alive? On the hardest adamant, some foot print of us is stamped in; the last Rear of the host will read traces of the earliest Van. But whence? O, heaven, whither? Sense knows not; Faith knows not; only that it is through Mystery to Mystery, from God to God.

A familiar illustration sometimes helps a philosophical difficulty. The following story, which is highly characteristic of the parties, and is nevertheless of a kind that may be told without violating the trustfulness of private intercourse, will very well answer our present purpose. Leigh Hunt and Carlyle were once present among a small party of equally well-known men. It chanced that the conversation rested with these two—both first-rate talkers, and the others

sat well pleased to listen. Leigh Hunt had said something about the Islands of the Blest, or El Dorado, or the Millennium, and was flowing on in his bright and hopeful way, when Carlyle dropt some heavy tree-trunk across Hunt's pleasant stream, and banked it up with philosophical doubts and objections at every interval of the speaker's joyous progress. But the unmitigated Hunt never ceased his overflowing anticipations, nor the saturnine Carlyle his infinite demurs to those finite flourishings. The listeners laughed and applauded by turns; and had now fairly pitted them against each other, as the philosopher of Hopefulness and of the Unhopeful. The contest continued with all that ready wit and philosophy, that mixture of pleasantry and profundity, that extensive knowledge of books and character, with their ready application in argument or illustration, and that perfect ease and good-nature, which distinguish each of these men. The opponents were so well matched that it was quite clear the contest would never come to an end. But the night was far advanced, and the party broke up. They all sallied forth; and leaving the close room, the candles and the arguments behind them, suddenly found themselves in presence of a most brilliant star-light night. They all looked up. "Now," thought Hunt, "Carlyle's done for!—he can have no answer to that!" "There!" shouted Hunt,

"look up there! look at that glorious harmony, that sings with infinite voices an eternal song of hope in the soul of man." Carlyle looked up. They all remained silent to hear what he would say. They began to think he was silenced at last—he was a mortal man. But out of that silence came a few low-toned words, in a broad Scotch accent. And who, on earth, could have anticipated what the voice said? "Eh! it's a *sad* sight!"——Hunt sat down on a stone step. They all laughed—then looked very thoughtful. Had the finite measured itself with infinity, instead of surrendering itself up to the influence? Again they laughed—then bade each other good night, and betook themselves homeward with slow and serious pace. There might be some reason for sadness, too. That brilliant firmament probably contained infinite worlds, each full of struggling and suffering beings—of beings who had to die—for life in the stars implies that those bright worlds should also be full of graves; but all that life, like ours, knowing not whence it came, nor whither it goeth, and the brilliant Universe in its great Movement having, perhaps, no more certain knowledge of itself, nor of its ultimate destination, than hath one of the suffering specks that compose this small spot we inherit.

HENRY TAYLOR

AND

THE AUTHOR OF "FESTUS."

" Hand in hand at wisdom's shrine,
Beauty with Truth I strive to join,
And grave Assent with glad Applause;
To paint the story of the soul,
And Plato's vision to controul
By Verulamian laws!"

AKENSIDE.

" But as we, in our isle imprisoned,
Where cattle only, and divers dogs are bred,
The precious unicorns, strange monsters call,—
So thought he sweets strange, that had none at all."

DONNE. *Elegy* 4.

" —— Great thoughts, like great deeds, need
No trumpet. * * * * * *
But set thyself about it, as the sea
About earth, lashing at it day and night;
And leave the stamp of thine own soul in it,
As thorough as the fossil flower in clay."

Additional Scene to "Festus."

" Yea, copyists shall die, spark out and out.
Minds which Combine and Make, alone can tell
The bearings and the workings of all things
In and upon each other."

Ibid.

HENRY TAYLOR

AND

THE AUTHOR OF "FESTUS."

THE unrepressed vigour of imagination,—and the graceful display of philosophical thought; the splendour of great and original imagery,—and the level dignity of the operations of the understanding; the passion of poetry,—and the sound sense of poetry; are proposed to be discussed in this essay. The calm philosophy of poetry, in its addresses to the understanding and the domestic affections, now holds the ascendancy; but as the fresh and energetic spirit of the present age advances, a contest is certain to take place in the fields of Literature on the above questions. The sooner, therefore, the battle is fought out, the better; and to this end, the poetical antagonisms shall at once be brought into collision. Several of the parties being personal friends, they will not be so much surprised at this summary cry "to arms," as that very large portion of the

public who fancy that the periods of poetry are all over with us in England.

A peculiar principle, and a peculiar style, are the first things to be considered in this business. If the absence of enthusiasm, or the total subjugation of it by the intellect; and if the absence of a power to call up imagery, or the levelling down of imagery to a barren regularity, be now considered as the true principle and style for the greatest poetry, then all our great poets of by-gone ages, have written in error, and must no longer be accounted great, except in the light of barbarians, even as Pope and Dr. Johnson regarded the men of the Elizabethan age. But this will never be admitted again, for the public mind has outgrown all such teaching. The attempt, therefore, seems to be to bring back the same impression or opinion, without verbally stating it,—and, by making an exception in favour of Shakspere, to merge all the glories of his poetical contemporaries in a generalized idea of extravagance and disorder.

Most readers will recollect that Wordsworth has prefixed to his beautiful poem, "To the Daisy," some lines from Withers, which either originated or encouraged in him the principle by which the descriptive part of his poetry is so peculiarly influenced :—

> "That from every thing I saw
> I could some instruction draw,

> And raise pleasure to the height,
> Through the meanest object's sight," &c.
>
> WITHERS.

The disposition to misuse an extreme principle has for some time been perceptible. The great poet Wordsworth has said how much to his mind was "the meanest flower that blows." No doubt but it was much *to him;* and no doubt there is nothing mean, essentially, in nature. But when a number of other poets say—"Well, and the meanest flower is just as much *to us!*"—we cannot believe that they are sincere, for the original impression is not theirs, and no one, by mere imitation, can have "thoughts that lie too deep for tears." The universal application of a sentiment, cannot imply a universal sensibility. (It should here be understood that we are not at present alluding to either of the gentlemen at the head of this paper, but speaking in general terms.) But out of this same "following" has been derived a notion that the more mean and insignificant a subject, or object is in itself, the more fit and worthy is the opportunity for a poet to make it great by uplifting and surrounding it with his own personal feelings and thoughts. To all this we say—"Leave the great poet his originality." His best teachings should be received, but his experience should not be imitated or assumed. Nor will the principle bear it any further than he has carried it without manifest injury to our litera-

ture. With Burns the daisy was a "wee, modest, crimson-tippit flower;"—with Wordsworth it has "a function Apostolical." The small celandine, or common pilewort, Wordsworth calls a "Prophet of delight and mirth." That in his enlarged and peculiar sense of these things, the terms are admissible, we very well know; but we should not be prompt to respect any other poet who declared that to him the daisy was like any apostle, or that he could discover anything prophetic of mirth in the small celandine! It was so, to Wordsworth: it is not so to many of his followers.

The steady, classical, and perspicuous style of the accomplished author of "Philip van Artevelde" is much to be admired. He, and a few others, have rightly understood the true meaning of simplicity, as matter of style. The word, however, has become injurious by the notion that has been created from it, and very much by Mr. Taylor's assistance, that all splendour of imagery is mere redundancy; and this notion has hence become a sort of excuse for the pride of natural barrenness.

Now, for our own individual taste, however, we freely declare that we like something more "audible and full of vent," and are not without apprehension that an exclusive devotion to the idea of simplicity may gradually induce baldness throughout our poetical literature. There is coming among us a cant about simplicity, as though the means of greatness were

the end. "Nothing (as an ingenious gentleman recently said in a monthly periodical) can be more simple than 'Give me a pot of beer!'—yet nobody would pretend that this was grandeur." To say this would be like the assertion of Lord Peter, in excuse for feeding his poor brothers upon nothing but bread. "Bread (said Lord Peter) is the staff of life. Bread comprises within itself the essence of beef, and mutton, and veal, and partridge, and pheasant, and woodcock, and grouse, and quail, and plum-pudding, and custard." This will not do; the beauty and the power of passion and imagination, simply *expressed*, is the great point to aim at; and yet by no means to the exclusion of such images and phrases as spontaneously arise out of those great elements, and are in such cases their most natural interpreters. For a demonstration of the above position, if not thought self-evident, we can only refer to the practice of the greatest epic, dramatic, and lyric poets.

"So then," it may be said, "you are for the choice of great subjects, and a great style; and not for the meanest things, and simplicity?" That would be the taunting form of the proposition, and would convey a false inference besides. Not in that mode are principles of Art to be discussed. We are for an unexclusive choice in good subjects, and we are for a suitable style to each. But we are anxious to see poets create, and design subjects in which their own

individuality shall be merged; and that it should be well understood that true simplicity does not refer to puerilities or a barren style, but, primitive emotions, and a clear and concise form of expression.

The reader will perhaps recollect, or turn to, the remarks (in Vol. II. Art. II.) on Mr. Macaulay's position, that to write, or even to enjoy poetry of the highest class, involves a certain degree of "unsoundness of mind." We hope it has there been shown how much the notion amounts to; and that no songs of "battle, murder, and sudden death," can be called the perfection of right reason, merely because the slayers are ancient Romans. Macaulay is a man of great practical understanding and undoubtedly "sound mind"—but "how about these Lays?—for he cannot be sound and unsound?"

In Mr. Taylor's preface to "Philip van Artevelde," he propounds his philosophy of poetry with that clearness of expression and gentleman-like courtesy in differing, which are characteristic of him. Yet we think that besides certain indefensible opinions and assertions, he has not fully met the question. With his strictures on Lord Byron we agree in the main Byron was certainly a better constructor, and a more practical and generally intelligible artist than Shelley, though his imagination was far inferior to that of Shelley. Still, it cannot be rightly inferred because Shelley's imagination carried him away

often into regions where his genius could neither act, nor whence it could return to earth, but was lost in the bright Immensity, that therefore poets ought to make all imagination subservient to the reasoning faculty, and what is called "good sense," or that it should be reduced to the condition of a balanced level, and its natural images be shorn and shaven to baldness. "Suppose I were to say," says Dr. Burney, "Well—I have been to Italy—seen the Venus, the Apollo, and many fine things,—but after all, give me a good, plain, barber's block."

Mr. Henry Taylor would no doubt say that he did not mean this; but we fear his argument would amount to something like it, and at any rate is calculated to produce such an impression, and inculcate a hard dry taste in the public mind. Mr. Taylor argues for poets obtaining a fine balance of the faculties (devoutly to be desired, of course), and regards "good sense" as "one of the most *essential* constituents of genius"—which it undoubtedly is, philosophically understood; and undoubtedly is *not*, in the conventional meaning of the term, as he uses it. These arguments, therefore, must rather be regarded as pretexts for depressing the tone of all modern poetry, moderating passion at the very outset, and stunting the growth of imagination by never suffering it to rise beyond the calm level of reason and common sense.

There must be something peculiarly undramatic in the mind that could conceive and execute a dramatic subject in so lengthy a form as to comprise the same number of lines as six plays, each of the ordinary length. In this philosophical poem, we may find a prolonged illustration of Mr. Taylor's principles of poetry and the drama. A dramatic poet, without passion;—what does that amount to? A romantic poet, without any romance in him;—what does that amount to? A contemplative poet, without a heaven of ideality above his head;—what does that amount to? A rhythmical writer, and teacher, who denies the distinct element of poetry *as* poetry.

Yet a distinct element it assuredly has. Poetry, though made up of other things, is yet as much an entire thing as any of the substantive faculties of the mind, each of which is made up of the other faculties. For, there is no such thing as pure reason, pure imagination, pure judgment;—but each helps the other, and of necessity. Still, we admit a distinct faculty of each. In like manner do we claim a distinct existence for poetry.

Should we think it fitting that our legislators delivered statesmanlike and eloquent orations in Parliament with a musical accompaniment; or our philosophers lectured in recitative? The arguments of Mr. Taylor lead us directly to the question of why he does not write in prose? Certainly "Philip van

Artevelde" would have been as dramatic and romantic in prose as in its present form. Its rhythm appears unnecessary, and he feels it. After writing an historical romance in about ten thousand lines of verse, which ought to have been three volumes of elegant prose, he then composes a Preface to justify the proceeding. He says, "My critical views have rather resulted from composition than directed it." Finding he could rise no higher, he strives to show that rising higher would argue a loss "of the equipoise of reason."

It may now be asked,—Are there any signs of imaginative vitality among living authors, independent of those old established reputations, the owners whereof are reposing upon their laurels?—are there any new men with whom abstract power and beauty are a passion, and who possess the requisite faculties for their development? Are there, also, any signs of efforts, on their part, to revive or create a taste in the public for the higher classes of composition?—and if so, with what degree and prospect of success? These are surely very interesting questions—some of them easily answered, others open to considerable difficulties and incertitude.

Whatever may be the struggles—foolishly called *all*-absorbing—which are now transpiring in politics, in theology, and in the commercial world; and however convinced each of the different parties may be that nothing else can go right—nor that, indeed,

any thing else can be properly attended to—till their particular cause is settled as they wish,—it is manifest that there is quite as great a struggle coming on in literature, and in that very department which is most neglected by the public—we mean in poetry. The public does not see this; and as poetry is at present so unpopular, the critics do not see the struggle; but let anybody look at the persevering announcements of new poems in advertisements, and read a few of the poems of some half-dozen of the best, and then the truth of our assertion will become apparent. The energetic spirit at work in various minds, and with different kinds and degrees of power, but still at work, not only without the slightest outward encouragements, but with all manner of opposition in their path, and with the certain expenditure of time and worldly means upon their "losing game," must absolutely possess something genuine in its elements, and in its hopeful and indefatigable continuity.

Imaginative and impassioned poetry has not been so uncommon among us as may have been thought Those whom "it concerned" in nearly every instance discovered it, and welcomed it. Besides those who are already recognized, there have been, and are, others. Several of these little known, or unknown, works we will mention. It is a service of abstract love; and we trust it will be received, not in a resent-

ful, but a kindly spirit, by those who may now hear of them for the first time. One of the least known, published as long since as 1824, under the unpromising title of "Joseph and his Brethren," was full of the elements of true poetry,—in passion, imagination, and in thoughts resulting from reason, experience, and understanding. It also displayed great descriptive powers. The resemblance of the author's mind to that of P. J. Bailey, the author of "Festus," is extraordinary. As the writings of this latter poet are at present but little known, (his work was only published four years since, and a true poet has little chance under ten or twelve,) we ought perhaps to introduce him at once in an extract:—

"We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives
Who thinks most; feels the noblest; acts the best.
And he whose heart beats quickest lives the longest:
Lives in one hour more than in years do some
Whose fat blood sleeps as it slips along their veins.

Festus, p. 62-3.

"We do not make our thoughts; they grow in us
Like grain in wood: the growth is of the skies,
Which are of nature, nature is of God.
The world is full of glorious likenesses.
The poet's power is to sort these out,
And to make music from the common strings

With which the world is strung; to make the dumb
Earth utter heavenly harmony, and draw
Life clear, and sweet, and harmless as spring water
Welling its way through flowers."

Ibid, Additional Scene.

We should at once decline to argue with anybody who denied the poetry in the above passages. The philosophy of the poem of "Festus" is to show the great ministry of evil as a purifier. But the spirit itself mourns, not knowing its purpose. In the following, the Spirit of Evil speaks:—

"The arrow knoweth not its end and aim.
And I keep rushing, ruining along,
Like a great river rich with dead men's souls.
For if I knew I might rejoice; and that
To me by nature is forbidden. I know
Nor joy nor sorrow; but a changeless tone
Of sadness, like the night-wind's, is the strain
Of what I have of feeling." *Festus*, p. 26.

This poem abounds with equally fine passages, and in nearly every page. Such perfect instances of contrast are the minds of Mr. Henry Taylor, and of the author of "Festus," that you cannot open the works of either, scarcely at any one page, which does not furnish a striking illustration of the passion of true poetry on the one hand, and the philosophical sense, and statesman-like self-possession of verse which should have been prose, on the other.

Here is a passage from the "Additional Scene to

Festus" on *love*, which Mr. Taylor will no doubt regard as the total loss of "the equipoise of reason," as indeed it usually is, we suspect.

"*Festus.* It is therefore that I love thee: for, that when
The fiery perfection of the world,
The sun, shall be a shadow, and burnt out,
There is an impulse tow'rds eternity
Raised by this moment's love."

Instead of entering into any useless arguments on this point, we will at once give a love-scene from Mr. Taylor's work.

Let us take an illustration of "reason" and "passion," as the two stand opposed in Mr. Taylor's mind. We will extract a portion of the scene in which Artevelde has, with much intreaty and many flattering protestations, won the consent of Elena to devote herself to him;—

Artevelde. "Tell me, sweet Elena,
May I not hope, or rather can I hope,
That for such brief and bounded space of time
As are my days on earth, you'll yield yourself
To love me living, and to mourn me dead."

Elena is altogether a creature of impulse and emotion,—an Italian, of great beauty and of high birth, but of wounded affection and blighted fame. She loves Artevelde passionately, and his "proposals" (the usual worldly term suits well here) affect her deeply. As he presses her to give him up her heart, she replies;—

"I cannot—no—
I cannot give you what you've had so long;
Nor need I tell you what you know so well.
I must be gone."

and again;—

"No, let me go—I cannot tell—no—no—
I want to be alone—
Oh! Artevelde, for God's love let me go!"

She leaves him with these words. The sequel proves that her love was deep and intense. She lives with him till the battle in which he was killed. She finds his body among the slain, kneels by it, embraces it, is discovered in this state, and when a French knight attempts to defend her from the charge of having been the paramour of the dead hero, she starts to her feet with the words,—

"Thou liest, I was his paramour;"

thus glorying in her devotion. She revenges the insults offered to him, as he lies dead, by stabbing a man to the heart, and is herself killed in her resistance to a separation from his body. This closing scene is very ineffectively executed, and the situation being too strong for Mr. Taylor, he has painted it coarsely, and with an effect of bombast, the result of artificiality striving to supply the want of passion; but it is detailed here to show that Elena *had* a passion for Artevelde.

How then, to revert to their previous life, did he,

cool and self-possessed, comport himself, when she, agitated with conflicting emotions, left him with the words, "Oh, Artevelde, for God's love let me go!"

"*Artevelde* (after a pause) The night is far advanced upon the morrow,
And but for that conglomerated mass
Of cloud with ragged edges, like a mound
Or black pine-forest on a mountain's top,
Wherein the light lies ambushed, dawn were near,—
Yes, *I have wasted half a summer's night.*
Was it well spent! *Successfully it was.*
How little flattering is a woman's love!—
Worth to the heart, come how it may, a world;
Worth to men's measures of their own deserts,
If weighed in wisdom's balance, merely nothing."

So that the pure gift of feeling which is worth a world to man's *heart*, is worth nothing in comparison with a much wiser thing—his vain glory! Recovering himself, therefore, as quickly as he can, he calls one of his officers—enters upon business—and orders two men to be hanged!

Here then we find placed before us passion and reason; or, at least, Mr. Taylor's idea of passion and reason. The latter he exalts in his theory; the former he condemns as selfish and as vanity. Which is here the more selfish? Passion gives all, even to life itself. Reason wins all, and sneers at it. In the world's estimation this self-possessed reason is of course the most "respectable;" but which stands purest in the eye of God?

Several poems of the higher class of imaginative composition have appeared during the last ten years. In allusion to the learned and versatile author of the "Judgment of the Flood," and the "Descent into Hell," we could hardly do better than quote a couplet from the American poet, Cornelius Mathews—

> "Thy heart-gates, mighty, open either way,—
> Come they to feast, or go they forth to pray."

The "Record of the Pyramids," by J. E. Reade, is another of those works in which the author has chosen a great subject, and had a high design in his mind. The execution in this case is unequal to the conception, owing to the preservation of a certain philosophic calm, under circumstances when nothing but passion could have carried through such stupendous actions as are described, or induced full faith in the reader. But the respect and admiration due to an author who has constantly manifested such high and pure aims in art, ought always to be gladly awarded.

While treating of works of design, we should not be deterred from submitting a few remarks concerning "Orion" (using the same privilege as Mr. Taylor, and other authors, in their Introductions and Prefaces), but want of space warns us to pass on to the works of others, which it is our duty to discuss in preference.

"Vivia Perpetua," by Sarah Flower Adams, is an

example of an exalted subject, worthily wrought out, clear in design, skilful in construction. The characters are well drawn; the style a true example of simplicity. The ideas are more characterized by sweetness and pure religious emotion than by abstract imagination, either of beauty or power. Yet the power and beauty of *impassioned reason* (we commend the expression to Mr. Taylor's especial attention) are never absent, being personified in the principal character. Some of the situations in which Vivia is placed, are highly dramatic. The following fine extract shows the noble Roman lady renouncing faith in the gods of her country.

TEMPLE OF JUPITER OLYMPUS.

VIVIA PERPETUA *at an altar burning before a statue of the god.*

VIVIA. Lo! where all trembling, I have knelt and pray'd;
Where vow and sacrifice, at morn and eve,
Shrouded in incense dim, have risen to appease
The wrath, great Jove, of thy once dreaded thunder,—
Up to the might of thy majestic brows,
Yet terrible with anger, thus I utter,—
I am no longer worshipper of thine!
Witness the firm farewell these stedfast eyes
For ever 'grave upon thy marble front;
Witness these hands—their trembling is not fear—
That on thine altar set for evermore
A firm renouncing seal—I am a Christian!
Where are thy lightnings?—where thine awful thunder?
Melted from out thy grasp by love and peace!

* * *

> The shadows blacken, and the altar-flame
> Troubles them into motion. God of stone,
> For the last time, farewell!"
>
> *Vivia Perpetua*, Act II. Sc. 4.

The character of Vivia Perpetua in the hands of her regenerator from the honoured dust of by-gone ages, stands dramatically entire and intact; but she has also by suggestion a spiritual connexion with all those who, in any age, struggle towards the light, proclaiming the truth that is in them, and suffer with her a martyrdom in the scorn and injuries of the world. It is a poem for the future, as well as the past. It is a great subject, worthily executed, although it would probably bear considerable abbreviation.

Mr. Taylor's acquaintance with the poetry of his time appears to be either very limited, or else we must understand him to denounce all poetry except that which is adapted to his own peculiar nature and taste. He actually concludes his observations on Lord Byron, which are sufficiently disparaging, by the following statement: —"Nor can it be said that anything better, or indeed *anything half so good*, has been subsequently produced. The poetry of the day, whilst it is *greatly inferior* in quality, continues to be *like his in kind!*" And this, with Alfred Tennyson alive in the world, at whom, indeed, the rest of the paragraph seems to point directly. We would also commend to Mr. Taylor's discomposed attention the poems of "Paracelsus" and of "Festus,"

Mr. Patmore's poems, and Mr. Darley's "Ethelstan," were it only that he might endeavour to discover the likeness to Lord Byron. They are as unlike, by the presence of the finer qualities of imagination, as "Philip van Artevelde" is unlike by the absence of passion.

Whatever greatness has originated in Wordsworth's mind from his habit of refusing "to share any glory with his subject" by the systematic selection of things devoid of much obvious interest in themselves, and, as he often declares, on account of their meanness, to the eye, or to the general impressions of mankind, it is much to be doubted if the adoption of this principle *by others* will not lead them downwards in the scale of enthusiasm. It may tend to throw them exclusively upon their individualities, which may not inaptly be represented by a paraphrase of a well-known couplet,—

> "My Thought is great because the object's mean:
> Then 'twould be greater were no object seen."

We are fully aware how open every argument of this kind will be to misrepresentation. Nevertheless we shall speak it out, and trust to having justice in the long run. It is such poems as Wordsworth's "Laodamia,"—the scriptural grandeur of simplicity in "Michael,"—the high-wrought fervours of his immortal "Ode," and not his illustrations of "the meanest objects," that all lovers of poetry so deeply

admire, and that his disciples should regard as stars to guide them.

It is much to be lamented by all those who are seriously interested in works of art, that the power of conception should by no means necessarily include the power of design and construction; nor do even these always insure a worthily executive hand. A singular example of great capacities in execution with a deplorable inability to conceive and build up a fabric, was exhibited some few years since, in a half-epic, half-lyrical poem, privately circulated, entitled, "Ernest, or Political Regeneration," which was reviewed in the Monthly Magazine, during the editorship of Mr. Heraud, and also in one of the leading quarterlies. It is thickly inlaid with passages of the most sterling poetry throughout. The following lines will be of good application to some remarks previously made with reference to the inseparable nature of imagination from all poems of large scope, and from poetry itself, which is a radiant Passion no less than an art:—

"The glorious sun, that sate alone
While yet creation was a child;
Is sovereign still upon his throne!
Undimm'd, undarkened, undefiled,
They watch and wheel, those mighty spheres,
Still rushing round him at his will;
Through boundless space and countless years,
And he doth list their music still.

And ever onward as they roll,
He cheers them with his quickening ray."

Ernest, p. 250.

Of the subject of "Festus," we have already spoken. The build of its design is so obviously taken from Goethe's "Faust," whatever differences may also exist, that we can but regard it as so far unworthy of the striking originality of the materials of passion, thought, and imagination, comprised in its structure. The execution breathes throughout a fulness of power. That the work often runs wild, is admissible; and besides wilful redundancies, it also has many violations of taste.

But, however great a conception may be, however splendid the imagination, the modern artist can never be too earnestly exhorted to think well of his design, and the construction in all its parts. Why should he fail, as so many do, in these things? Let us endeavour, in a few concluding words, to make our meaning clear to all whom it may concern.

There burns in the elements of certain natures, in the secret wells of their being, the deep sources where dwelleth the soul, a yearning towards some vaster region than the world which surrounds them, and an aspiration which would cleave its crystalline walls and soar away towards illimitable heavens, unknown ecstacies, and the eternal mysteries of Divinity. They

feel this yearning, this aspiration, communicating itself to the very temperature and current of their blood; it stings them to the quick of inward being; it breaks out in drops upon the forehead, and rills down this poor inadequate, corporeal frame. They have mighty thoughts and deep; the deep thoughts often cross each other, and re-cross in their tumultuous lights and shades, till the man is vanquished by the over-forces of his own mind: they see mighty phantasies and shapes; and the vision and the image rule over the man. Does he dream? No, he wakes; he has awakened to more things than his fellows. Is he mad, or of intellect unsound? Not so; for he sees clearly and knows that his mystery is but some excess in the common mystery of all life, and that he is but a troubled human creature; a frame-work troubled by some rebounding and imprisoned spirit within, that seeks for freedom in the illimitable air and in the illimitable light, not as a mere wild voyage to regions where he would be altogether strange and confounded, but as though by a sense of birth-right in these intolerable desires. But Time moves on—the wheels of the years pass over the head and face turned star-ward,—and the man finds that he will assuredly be, some day, old. He is but where he was when he first commenced this upward-looking, these aspirations to infinity. His thoughts now slowly recoil and revolve inwardly, and his visions gather

closer round him. He seeks a sublime result for that within, which is denied to him from without. He places the images of his mind in order, even as a man before the death of his mortality arrangeth his house; and finally he is no longer vanquished by his thoughts, but fixes and rules over the vision and the dream. Here then he finds some solace for his yearnings; he no longer seeks to disperse himself, but to collect; no longer to revel in the arms of bright and unattainable desires, but to build. And the condition of this man's mind is that of Creative Passion.

But to the store-house of the world, and to the things of worth for man's largest use and benefit, his soul's sake and body's sake, of what value is this creative passion? Can it take us up into the blessed air beside it, or help us to ride with it triumphant upon the triumphant winds? Or can it come down to us on earth, and if so, with what benefit to those who need help? How shall we perceive and feel it? How know it, how take it to heart and use it, as an incentive to hope, a refuge for sorrow, or an influence to elevate, and a medium to bring good tidings to mankind? Of what value to us shall be a palace of mighty voices, and echoes from mightier worlds, if we have no fair entrance porch, or if, having entered, we cannot distinguish the passages and step-flights from the pillars and the

walls, nor the right shape of anything, nor the clear interpretation of any voice or echo?

Out of these wild imaginations, these ungoverned and formless phantasies, these outrages to common sense, which heated brains call genius or inspiration, we must seek to free ourselves. Should we not call in the aid of calm reason? Must we not command all these passionate emotions and imaginings by erecting a glacier in the midst, at the summit of which Sound Sense shall sit upon his judgment throne?

There sits Sound Sense upon his throne! He is at the same altitude as those fantastic dreams and fiery emotions which he is to govern. Yet a little while he sits; not haughtily, but with a sober pride. And behold!—his throne is sinking—it surely is sinking!—the crowned Perfection is sinking lower and lower—the glacier is dissolving at the base—the passions are cruelly hot—the summit of his glacier has now dropt flat—his grave long face gapes wide, and out of that widening dismay a grey mist issues, amidst which that very miscalculating presumption is diffused and lost.

Are we again upon earth? We are safely there, though the descending mist is there also. Nay, but Sound Sense is a good fellow when upon earth. Let us all be reconciled. For out of the mist we now see a man emerge—an actual, living piece of hu-

manity. He is a Working Man, and may help us in this matter.

He hath a rough beard, and a strong, well-knit, supple body; a large organic forehead, and a steady eye. In one hand he holds a chisel, in the other a lump of clay. A modeller and a mason, a designer and a builder is this working man. He would speak to us. Shall we hear him? Or shall he be dumb, and go on with his own work? Will the Spirit of the Age listen to an unknown, unlaurelled labourer? Well,—let him say what he thinks.

"The first thing for the making of a house, is the definite impulse to have a house made. The second thing, is to have imagination to conceive of the design. And the third thing, is to have a good workman's hand."

All this is common, plain-spoken stuff, which every body knew before. Why should a man who makes things, presume to tell us how things are made? But let him proceed for the chance of something better.

"The definite impulse, is a passion for that thing; the imagination is the power to think the shape; and the hand is the power to make the shape of the

thought. You must listen, or depart. For now I will go on. The passion of the heart commands the passion of the brain, when the heart is of the right strength as meant by God for a natural, true man; and in those heart-felt emotions doth God's voice speak — the only inspiration of genius, because a revelation from the Infinite Maker to the finite maker who devoutly conceives these things, and aspires to make them manifest to his brothers of the earth. If a man have no passion he can have no true impulse to create any thing. If he have passion, what he designs will then be in accordance and proportion with what he imagines; and lastly, what he imagines can only receive due form, and be intelligible to fitting eyes, by mastery of hand."

"This shapeless lump of clay, so unsightly, so cold, and unsuggestive, is the type of all substance whereon no work has been done. Breathe fire into it—give to it a soul, and it shall have high capacities; set an artist's hand to work upon it, and it may have an angel's form. All the great imaginings, all the splendid visions that spring up in the mind, or can be created by voluntary power, will exercise no good influence in the world, nor have a long date, unless they be wrought upon a clear design, and are built up into a suitable structure. Nay, thoughts themselves, howsoever lofty or profound, must have intelligible form. The spirit of philosophy and of art,

may comprehend the abstractions, and the germinating ideas as they exist in the work-places of the brain; but even these practised spirits understand the things better when they have acquired some definite shape, visible within, if not without; while for the use and benefit of mankind at large no labour is available that hath not intelligible form."

"As generations advance in civilization and refinement, a polish comes over the surface of nature, so that an artist that works with a light hand, shall find his tool's edge turned, and his labours produce no effect. In these days the people need power. They talk of knowledge, but must first be made to feel truth, and desire it. Among the relics of ancient Egypt there is a colossal granite Fist; sole memory of a forgotten god. Four thousand years have those granite fingers been held close. They did their work—and were locked up. It was that power which reared the pyramids; which gave them their structure, their form, and their eternity. They could not have lasted as rude shapeless heaps. They could not have endured the elements; man could not have borne the sight of them. Imagine that mighty fragment of a limb to open out again into a Hand! A good change has come among some nations, and will gradually develope itself through all nations, — the change of feeling and conviction in the estimate of power. True power is now seen to arise from the

nobler passions of the heart, and of the intellect. Use, then, that mighty open Hand with moral aim, and build for truth a lofty fabric."

"Nothing will now be received which has not some distinct principle, a clear design, a shapely structure. Characters, passions, thought, action and event, must all be within a circle and citadel of their own, bounded by no hard line of horizon, and opening large portals on all sides to the influences and sympathies of the outer world. The only artist-work that does good in its day, or that reaches posterity, is the work of a Soul that gives Form. But without the impassioned life of that soul, the best-reasoned form and structure are but cold vanities, which leave man's unstirred nature just where they found it, and therefore are of no service on earth."

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